

Greek Historiography

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GREEK HISTORIOGRAPHY

THOMAS F. SCANLON



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Roman Historiography

Andreas Mehl, translated by Hans-Friedrich Mueller

Greek Historiography

Thomas F. Scanlon

Greek Historiography

Thomas F. Scanlon

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2015

© 2015 Thomas F. Scanlon

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ,
UK

Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Scanlon, Thomas Francis, author.

Greek historiography / Thomas F. Scanlon.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4051-4522-0 (cloth)

1. Greece—Historiography. I. Title.

DF211.S33 2015

938.0072—dc23

2015006681

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Cover image: Roman statue of Clio, 2nd century, Museo Pio-Clementino, Rome. Photo: Marie-Lan Nguyen 2006, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Clio_Pio-

Preface

This book aims to provide an introduction to Greek historical writing across its evolution over about three quarters of a millennium, from about 500 BC to AD 240. The work begins with an overview of the “logographers,” – that is, local “storytellers” prior to Herodotus, such as Hecataeus and others; then it moves to a closer discussion of the major figures of Herodotus and Thucydides, chronicling the major upheavals, internal and external, of city-states in the classical era. Next it surveys the perspectives of exiled authors in the much different times of Xenophon and Polybius and ends with an overview of later figures who wrote in Greek during the Roman era: Fabius Pictor, Posidonius, and Diodorus Siculus in the late republic; Nicolaus of Damascus and Dionysius in the Augustan age; Josephus, Appian, and Arrian in the first and second centuries AD; and finally Dio Cassius and Herodian in the early third century AD. Few modern overviews have included the authors of the Roman era after Polybius, who constitute a rich illustration of the possibilities realized by the genre. Collectively, all these historians and their works raise questions about the definition of historical writing. These questions are addressed as they arise, and more comparatively in a concluding chapter.

In line with the whole series, this approach aims to be accessible to students and to interested general readers with little specialist background, and yet to offer, both to that audience and to more advanced students and scholars, some useful observations on the field. Greater attention is given to writers whose texts are extensively preserved, are available in good translations, and enjoy modern discussions in English; but the important but fragmentarily preserved authors are also discussed (see the bibliography at the end of each chapter and the Further Reading chapter at the end of the book).

The study of Greek historical writing – what is called “historiography” – differs from the direct study of Greek history by focusing on the literary aspects of the historical texts, their narratives and themes, and less on the absolute veracity of their accounts. Historiography treats historical writing as a form of literature, and one that furnished a connected narrative of events within the chosen topic. Along the way, we look at the general structure of the major narratives, their use of prefaces, digressions and speeches, and direct authorial comments. This study moves chronologically through the centuries, seeking to trace lines of continuity and innovation in each author and giving some suggestions as to how each one relates to his predecessors. Each chapter aims to situate the works it presents in their time and culture, specifically through a discussion of the life of the each author, the structure of his work,

and its debt to other literary and philosophical phenomena.

The discussion of each major extant work also offers a sequential reading of that narrative. This feature is unlike what one finds in many introductions to historical writing; but it is important here for several reasons. The readings are a guide to the main “story” of the history through the often complex thicket of names and places, a way to trace consecutively the chief themes and interests of an author (one inspiration here is Connor 1984). Along the way we pay special attention to the themes of “human nature” and “power” – concepts that were, admittedly, quite fluid and debatable for the ancients as they are for us today; but these themes appear in virtually every author surveyed, with different meanings and usages. Other major themes such as divine forces, leadership, causation, and the portrayal of the “barbarians” also feature throughout our discussion. Not all are, however, universal across all ancient historians, and we also examine themes that belong to the particular time and social context of each author, for example Greek unity for Herodotus, the dangers of rhetoric for Thucydides, and the relationship between a superpower and its dependents for Polybius.

It is the ancient construction of themes for each narrative that is of special interest here, since each historian’s work is an attempt to make sense of the chaotic events of public life, of individual decisions made with reason or emotion, and of collective judgment and actions dictated by the same human faculties. Historians thereby also hope to be didactic and pragmatically useful. Polybius offered one version of the utility of history in his preface:

The study of History is in the truest sense an education, and a training for political life; and that the most instructive, or rather the only, method of learning to bear with dignity the vicissitudes of fortune is to recall the catastrophes of others.

(Plb. 1.1, translated by Shuckburgh)

This book hopes to communicate the enthusiasm I felt as a young student of Thucydides, entranced as I was by his stark descriptions of power politics, which resonate so disturbingly across the ages. I had already been (and remain) enthralled by Greek and Roman poetry. But the subjective and literary aspects of historical writing, as well as their striking, modern relevance, were a revelation concerning how much supposedly objective reporting today still requires an ever vigilant, critical analysis.

Sincere gratitude is owed to the team at Wiley Blackwell for their encouragement, patience, and hard work, most especially to Sophie Gibson, Haze Humbert, Ben Thatcher, Allison Kostka, and Manuela Tecusan. The original reviewers and the development reviewers for the press gave excellent suggestions. Ingrid de Haas has done superb work as my research assistant. The University of California, Riverside has been very supportive with sabbatical leave and research funds for this project. Input from students in my

courses and seminars on historical writing has, over the years, guided me greatly in formulating the needs for this project. As always, Wendy Raschke has been a source of great intellectual and personal support. To her the work is dedicated with gratitude beyond words.

The translator's name is always indicated immediately after the citation at the end of a quoted passage, for example "Th. 1.21.1, Lattimore." Passages not marked in this way are my own translations.

Bibliography

Connor, W. R. 1984. *Thucydides*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Abbreviations

Acus.	Acusilaus
ad l.	<i>ad locum</i>
Androt.	Androtion
Antich.	Antiochus of Syracuse
Apollod.	Apollodorus, <i>Bibliotheca (Library)</i>
App.	Appian
BC	<i>Bella civilia (Civil Wars)</i>
<i>Praef.</i>	<i>Praefatio (Preface)</i>
A.R.	Apollonius of Rhodes
<i>Arg.</i>	<i>Argonautica</i>
Ar.	Aristophanes
<i>Pax</i>	<i>Pax (Peace)</i>
Arist.	Aristotle
EN	<i>Ethica Nicomachea (Nicomachean Ethics)</i>
<i>Po.</i>	<i>Poetica (Poetics)</i>
<i>Rh.</i>	<i>Rhetorica (Rhetoric)</i>
Arr.	Arrian
<i>An.</i>	<i>Alexandri anabasis</i>
Ath.	Athenaeus of Naucratis, <i>Deipnosophistae (Philosophers at Dinner)</i>
BNJ	Brill's New Jacoby, edited by Ian Worthington (2006–13; also at http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-jacoby).
c.	<i>circa</i>
cf.	<i>confer</i>
Callisth.	Callisthenes of Olynthus
Cic.	Cicero
QFr	<i>Epistulae ad Quintum fratrem (Letters to His Brother Quintus)</i>
Cleidem.	Cleidemus
D.C.	Dio Cassius, <i>Historia Romana (Roman History)</i>
D.H.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, <i>Antiquitates Romanae (Roman Antiquities)</i> (traditionally cited without title)
Comp.	<i>De compositione verborum (On</i>

	<i>Literary Composition)</i>
Pomp.	<i>Epistula ad Pompeium (Letter to Pompei)</i>
Rh.	<i>Ars rhetorica (Rhetoric)</i>
Th.	<i>De Thucydide (On Thucydides)</i>
DK	<i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> , edited by H. Diels and W. Kranz (6th ed., 1952).
D.S.	Diodorus Siculus, <i>Bibliotheca historica (Historical Library)</i>
EK	<i>Posidonius: The Fragments</i> , edited by L. Edelstein and I. G. Kidd (2nd ed., 1988–99).
Ephor.	Ephorus
fl.	<i>floruit</i>
FGrHist	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , edited by F. Jacoby et al. (1923–).
Hdn.	Herodian
Hdt.	Herodotus, <i>Historiae (Histories)</i>
Hecat.	Hecataeus of Miletus
<i>Hell. Oxy.</i>	<i>Hellenica Oxyrhynchia</i>
Heraclit.	Heraclitus
Hes.	Hesiod
Th.	<i>Theogonia (Theogony)</i>
Hom.	Homer
<i>Il.</i>	<i>Ilias (Iliad)</i>
<i>Od.</i>	<i>Odyssea (Odyssey)</i>
Hor.	Horace
<i>Epist.</i>	<i>Epistulae (Letters)</i>
Isoc.	Isocrates, <i>Orationes (Discourses)</i>
J.	Josephus
AJ	<i>Antiquitates Judaicae (Jewish Antiquities)</i>
<i>Ao.</i>	<i>Contra Apionem (Against Apio)</i>
<i>BJ</i>	<i>Bellum Iudaicum (Jewish War)</i>
<i>Vit.</i>	<i>Vita (Life)</i>
Jer.	Jerome
<i>Chron.</i>	<i>Chronica (Chronicle)</i>
<i>Der Kleine Pauly</i>	<i>Der kleine Pauly: Lexikon der Antike</i> , edited by K. Ziegler, W. Sontheimer, and H. Gärtner (1979 [1964–75])
KRS	<i>The Presocratic Philosophers</i> , edited and translated by G. S. Kirk, J. E.

	Raven, and M. Schofield (2nd rev. ed., 1983).
[Longin.]	Pseudo-Longinus
<i>Subl.</i>	<i>De sublimitate / Peri hupsous (On the Sublime)</i>
LSJ	<i>A Greek–English Lexicon</i> , compiled by H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, revised and augmented by H. S. Jones, with the assistance of R. McKenzie (9th ed., 1968)
Luc.	Lucian
<i>Macr.</i>	<i>Macrobian (Long Lives)</i>
Marcellin.	Marcellinus
<i>Vit. Thuc.</i>	<i>Vita Thucydides (Life of Thucydides)</i>
<i>Der Neue Pauly</i>	<i>Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopaedie der Antike</i> , edited by H. Cancik and H. Schneider (1996–)
<i>New Pauly</i>	<i>Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World</i> , edited by H. Cancik and H. Schneider (2002–)
Nic.Dam.	Nicolaus of Damascus
<i> OCD</i>	<i>The Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> , edited by S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (3rd ed., 1996).
Paus.	Pausanias, <i>Graeciae descriptio (Description of Greece)</i>
Philist.	Philistus of Syracuse
Philoch.	Philochorus
Pl.	Plato
<i>Lg</i>	<i>Leges (Laws)</i>
<i>R.</i>	<i>Respublica (Republic)</i>
Plb.	Polybius, <i>Historiae (Histories)</i>
Plu.	Plutarch
<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander</i>
<i>Dio</i>	<i>Vita Dionis (Life of Dion)</i>
<i>Glor. Ath.</i>	<i>De gloria Athenensium (On the Athenians’ Fame)</i>
<i>Mal. Herod.</i>	<i>De malignitate Herodoti (On the Malice of Herodotus)</i>
Posidon.	Posidonius
<i>s. v.</i>	<i>sub verbo</i>
Sall.	Sallust
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>Historiae (Histories)</i>
sc.	<i>scilicet</i>

Sen.	Seneca the Younger
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae (Letters)</i>
Str.	Strabo
<i>Syll.</i>	<i>Sylloge inscriptionum Graecarum</i> , edited by W. Dittenberger (3rd ed., 1915–24)
Tac.	Tacitus
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>Historiae (Histories)</i>
Th.	Thucydides. <i>Historiae (Histories)</i>
Theopomp.	Theopompus
V.	Vergil
A.	<i>Aeneis (Aeneid)</i>
X.	Xenophon
An.	<i>Anabasis</i>
<i>Hell</i>	<i>Hellenica</i>
Mem.	<i>Memorabilia</i>

1

**Origins and Early Forms of Greek
Historiography**

Prologue

Two famous passages from Thucydides' *History*, written between the late 430s and the early 390s BC, set out several themes common to the ancient Greek historians.

In the light of the evidence I have cited, however, no one would go wrong in supposing that the early events I have related happened much in that way, if one would not believe that the past was more like what the poets have sung, embellishing with their exaggerations, or the prose chroniclers have composed, in versions more seductive to the ear than true, being unexamined and many because of the lapse of time incredibly winning the status of patriotic legend, but if one would regard my discoveries from the clearest possible evidence as adequate for what concerns antiquity.

(Th. 1.21.1, Lattimore, adapted)

For [Athens] alone of existing cities surpasses her reputation when put to the test ... Through great proofs, and by exhibiting power in no way unwitnessed, we will be admired by this and future generations, thus requiring no Homer to sing our praises nor any other whose verses will charm for the moment and whose claims the factual truth will destroy, since we have compelled every sea and land to become open to our daring and populated every region with lasting monuments of our acts of harm and good.

(Th. 2.41.3–4, Lattimore)

The first quotation, a conclusion to Thucydides' introductory summary of earlier history, evidences direct competition with earlier poetic and prose versions of the Greek past and asserts the superiority of his narrative to those of poets and prose "story writers" (*logographoi*) (Marincola 1997: [Chapter 5](#), on the *topos*). It contrasts both poetic exaggeration or adornment and the persuasive power of popular prose stories with Thucydides' principles of clear evidence (*sēmēia*). The second passage, from Pericles' funeral oration, illustrates the monumental product of history through the example of Athens itself. From it we see that fame attested by proofs (*sēmēia*) and preserved through memory is of paramount importance to Greek culture, that truth witnessed or supported by evidence is superior to poetic fiction, and that demonstrations of power ensure memory in posterity. Power is a central theme: its acquisition and loss and the human attraction to it and admiration for it. How will future generations receive the message of dynamic achievements in the absence of poetic commemoration? Implicitly Pericles' own speech and the historian's account, together, ensure that the monuments – literally, "memorials" (*mnēmēia*) – will not be forgotten. ("We are irresistibly reminded of 1.22.1 with its dismissal of what the poets have sung

about; also surely of 1.22.4 with its contrast between Thucydides' own permanent but superficially unpleasing work ... and prize competitions designed for the immediate moment": Hornblower 1997 ad l.; see also Gomme 1956 ad l. and Lattimore 1998.)

The Western tradition has for centuries shared the foundational elements exemplified in these passages: preservation of the past, inspiration for the present, and a claim to truth. Thucydides' challenge to earlier tradition is also characteristic of an agonistic impulse among historians who forged the genre before him, most notably Herodotus (480s–420s BC) and, even earlier, Hecataeus (late sixth–early fifth century BC). The challenge was inevitable in the highly dynamic period of the beginnings of historical writing in the fifth century and earlier. Oral and written media in literature, local traditions, and budding empirical studies all coexisted and vied for attention. Genres were far less well defined in fifth-century Greece than in the following centuries. For example, drama, victory odes, new forms of lyric poetry, and philosophy or protoscience in verse and prose were all first evidenced from the mid-sixth to the mid-fifth centuries, prior to Herodotus' and Thucydides' compositions. Prose was especially fluid in content and form and was influenced by contemporary verse traditions in this progressive period. The earliest "historical" texts (by today's definition of empirical studies of people and places over time) depended heavily, but not exclusively, on purely oral sources of myth, folklore, or popular local traditions transmitted in verse or prose. These points will be explored below. Historical writing was a highly innovative enterprise in this first century of its existence, and we now turn to an examination of how it got to the point where Herodotus received it.

Choosing and Using History

Before turning to the complex shapes of pre-Herodotean tradition, we ask an obviously prior question about the meaning(s) of "history" common to the ancients and ourselves. Modern cynical wit sees history as nothing but a fiction, a hypocrisy, a litmus test for repeated human folly, or a tool for political control:

History is a set of lies, agreed upon. (Napoleon)

History is the nightmare from which we are trying to awaken. (James Joyce)

History would be a wonderful thing, if it were only true. (Tolstoy)

We learn from history that we do not learn from history. (Hegel)

Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past. (G. Orwell)

The genre's promise of truth inevitably provokes aphorisms alleging bias. Yet the skeptical impulse is a productive one, with an ancient pedigree reaching at least to Hecataeus in 500 BC. One scholar began his study of the philosophy of history with a bleak observation: "The future is dark, the present burdensome; only the past, dead and finished, bears contemplation" – (Elton 2002: 1) to which he added; "Like Oedipus we are dissatisfied with stories and seek our true parentage." The past can best explain our identity in relation to that of others in the present and can help us anticipate or even shape the future. (For a good sourcebook of quotations from modern intellectuals and scholars on select themes, see Morley 1999.)

The meaning of history depends upon its perceived function. Is history written to uncover a universally objective truth? Or is all history a verbal fiction, a "literary artifact," to use Hayden White's phrase, inevitably bound to the subjective aims of the author and culture in which it was formulated? (White 1978: 81–100; see Morley 1999: 97–131; on postmodern theory and Roman historians, Batstone 2009). One need not subscribe to any particular postmodern critical theory to make the simple observation that everything is political in the realm of human discourse. Universally shared absolutes of meaning and absolute objectivity are evanescent ideals that are reasonably embraced by groups and individuals, but they are rarely globally agreed upon. So social and cultural meaning arises from the discourse or dialogue among a multiplicity of views. One description of the current orientation to history as framed in literary studies is that of "the historicity of texts and the textuality of history" (Montrose 1998: 781). Otherwise stated, all texts, be they ancient and modern, primary and secondary, are embedded in social and cultural contexts. Our access to a historical past as a lived experience must be mediated by documents, monuments, and other forms of evidence as they happen to be preserved. In short, literature, including historical writing, is both socially produced and socially productive (Montrose 1998). In our review of ancient Greek historical writing, it will be useful to keep in mind this quality of texts being socially embedded and to ask how literary content, together with social context (both ancient and modern), determines the meaning of each text. Connor, for example, shows how Thucydides warned his contemporaries of the breakdown of traditional values and social order in the violent context of war, and how modern scholarship responded to these same themes with a torrent of scholarship in the Cold War and then in the post-Vietnam and postmodernist eras. Now Herodotus has enjoyed a renaissance among classical scholars in recent decades not least because of his constant reinforcement of respect for cultural diversity.

One useful definition of history common to both ancient and modern cultures is "writing about the past, selectively and with a purpose" (proposed by John Crook at a seminar I attended on "Society and the Ancient Historian" at the University of Cambridge, in winter 1977). Selection is of course dictated not

only by the body of available evidence selectively preserved or eliminated over time, but by the active choice of the author from among that material. Whether a Greek historian has relied upon written documents, other narrative accounts, oral tradition, or personal observation and interview, that author inevitably must choose to include certain aspects and exclude others. He includes, excludes, and thereby imposes his own principles of valuation of the material with every sentence. In this sense, the historian can be as much a literary artist as a novelist or playwright who chooses a historical topic. Yes, certain fundamental events and participants must be acknowledged, but within those constraints a huge amount of creative description and emphasis is possible.

Our understanding of a historian's purpose is a crucial element in deriving meaning from the text. A close reading of what the author tells us in the prologue is a good place to start, followed by attention to prominent themes and motifs of the narrative. But a good modern reader must be a detective, always probing into the broader social, cultural, and political context to ask why the historian chose specific events, was silent on others, focused on certain persons, inserted speeches and digressions where he did, and so on. "It is a commonplace," wrote Moses I. Finley, "that every historian's notion (conscious or subconscious) of his function is based on both the social and political situation in his own world and the literary and moral tradition he has inherited" (Finley 1987: 75). So attentive readers will also ask how the author's selections relate to his own political, moral, and literary environment in the period during which the work was composed. Famously, Herodotus' *History* has alternatively been read, since antiquity, as critical of Athens or as prejudicially defending that state in the later fifth century. Herodotus' account of Persian hegemony has been read accordingly as a cautionary commentary on the Athenian empire. This is not to argue that many historical texts are simply literary or political allegories for the reader to decode. More accurately, most ancient historians were keenly aware of and engaged in contemporary issues, and they had fundamental views motivating their projects. So the historians' engagement is often reflected in many nuances of their work, from the choice of topic to the framing of the major issues and the implicit or explicit judgments of historical agents. Note for example Thucydides' biased presentation of individuals (Westlake 1968; Woodhead 1960).

Oral Culture and Archaic Poetry

Other major early civilizations in the Eastern Mediterranean and northeast Africa, the Hittite, Mesopotamian, Hebrew, and Egyptian cultures, had historical records prior to Homer, including royal decrees, laws, and

aristocratic genealogies. These were not history per se, but the substance for it. These cultures adhered to the “canon of a sacralized tradition” while the later Greek historians followed their personal judgement of truth, being conditioned by a cultural or political environment (Bertelli 2001: 70). Also, significantly, Greece never had a theocratic monarchy of the Near Eastern or Egyptian type. Greeks did not, therefore, have to adhere in their myth and secular culture to a rigid religious ideology that controlled political areas. Rather they maintained a consistently looser social structure, organized around autonomous local regions with independent leaders. “The sacred” (*ta hiera*) was one important aspect of culture, but without influential local religious institutions or priesthoods. Indeed “religion” was not a Greek term or concept, though “the sacred” was a well respected aspect of thought, ritual practice, and public space (Burkert 1985: 269–71; Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1994: 8–9).

Across the Greek world, for centuries before Homer, oral myth was the dominant form of interest in the past. Without writing, local oral traditions of aristocratic genealogies and myths of gods and heroes were continually repeated but remained fluid and dynamic in their detail, responding to each city’s need to use the tales for its own purposes. The uses included “pan-Hellenic or regional consciousness and pride, aristocratic rule and especially their [the rulers’] right to rule, their pre-eminent qualifications and virtues, and an understanding of the gods, the meaning of cult practices – these and other comparable ends” (Finley 1987: 24–5). When myths were written down in the eighth century BC and for centuries thereafter, the stories continued to be used and altered for regional political interests, with completely new versions in original lyric and dramatic verses, but with less liberal change in the written texts already received. At that point a new “orality” emerged, namely that of the oral performance of both poetry and prose, which included public readings of Herodotus’ stories.

Out of Homer or Not?

Virtually all Greek literary traditions and genres, certainly including history, have some roots in Homer. The great Homeric and Hesiodic poems, generally considered products of a period that started around 750–700 BC, have in turn long been recognized as both the culmination of a rich and complex Mediterranean oral culture stretching centuries before and the starting point of an influential reception that reaches to the present. Nor did the Homeric epics gain instant, widespread renown in the eighth century. Their readership likely spread over the Greek-speaking world during the next two centuries, probably achieving very broad pan-Hellenic appeal by the time they were regularly recited at festivals in Athens and elsewhere in the sixth century (Nagy 1990:

Homer's origins are often tied to those of the "invention of writing" for the Greeks and to the broader use of written texts, publicly and privately, in the two centuries thereafter. Writing, it has been observed, was at the service of orality: it maintained the formality and content of oral tradition without critical self-examination, and yet the invention of historical writing enabled close criticism and examination of traditions in genealogy and divine explanations (Bertelli 2001: 60). Myths and local legends that circulated by word of mouth were now subject to fixed forms and were put to the test of inquiry (*historiē*). The individual writer often recasts the oral forms through an unbiased process that Oswyn Murray has called "deformation," that is, a process of "both conscious and unconscious self-interested distortion and literary or aesthetic distortion, as they operate over time within a tradition" (Murray 2001: 23–5). Yet the element of self-interest seems virtually always present in an artfully constructed ancient historical narrative. The author selects material for his purpose in undertaking the project, and his selection may contain a degree of social bias or an "agenda" to support certain values that serve a political or social hierarchy.

It has been commonly observed that Herodotus and his successors adopted many elements from Homer, including the topics of war and battle (from the *Iliad*), travel narrative and ethnographic curiosity (from the *Odyssey*), a search for the causes of conflict, and the idea of preserving deeds to ensure fame. One obvious protohistorical description is that of the shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18.478–607), where we have very interesting scenes of the life of a *polis*, its social components, and the first description of practices concerning Greek law. Herodotus has been called "the prose Homer" in a recently discovered inscription in praise of Halicarnassus (Lloyd-Jones 1999; Hornblower 2006: 306). Yet I downplay here causation as a uniquely epic contribution, since all traditional stories present it. History also shares with epic pragmatic techniques such as a sustained narrative with careful characterization of the protagonists, abundant use of speeches and dialogue to move the action forward, and vivid descriptions, especially of battles (Luce 1997: 4–5; Lang 1984; Marincola 2001: 77–85; Stadter 1973). We can add that the epics also include the prominent historiographical themes of traditional hierarchy, power, authority, and the human motives of honor, fear, and profit. But, significantly, unlike history (at least before biography), the epics gain unity from the focus on a central character, a man (*anēr*), and his conflicts or challenges with implications for all society around him: Achilles and Odysseus are crucial characters even when absent. History, when it evolved, rather studied social collectives (*poleis*) in conflict, as they were affected by the actions of leaders and individuals. Usually the events over time in a major, multicity conflict, such as a war – and not the deeds of one individual – give unity to the historical narrative. Certainly there appears in the historical

narrative a series of individuals who stand out as major agents in events. In most histories these prominent persons are given extensive characterizations through their own speeches and action and through authorial comment. But the greater action of the war itself determines the introduction, appearances, and departure of the major characters of the history. The course of the major events also dictates the brief appearances of lesser characters who play some noteworthy role, beyond which we know nothing of them.

History also generally eschews the Homeric extended concern with emotional issues of wrath and nostalgia; the seeking of causation from a divine machinery; and the domestic and personal scenes that form the bulk of *Odyssey* 13–24 (though Herodotus seems an exception). All these elements are selected out of history for different reasons. While the “machismo” of military exploits is kept, the focus on one man’s importance contradicts the later ethos, which promotes broad civic participation in a more *polis*-centered culture. Herodotus’ Croesus, for example, is an archetype of the impossibility of human self-sufficiency. Finally, domestic and tender scenes did not fit with a focus on the *aretē* of great men and were not suitable to political narrative. Such scenes were normally treated in lyric and dramatic poetry.

Hesiod (fl. c. 700) “deformed” myths as Homer had, but with him we see the emergence of a genealogical ordering of gods and heroes, accompanied by a concern for continuity and the harmonization of variant versions handed down by tradition. In his *Theogony*, Hesiod, like Homer, attributes to a divine source, the Muses, his access to the truth, but he also acknowledges that the Muses know “how to speak falsehoods that seem true, and, when [they] want, how to utter truths” (Hes. *Th.*, lines 27–8). The disclaimer allows the poet an escape clause against critics of his content, but it is also consistent with the Greek view that poets and prophets cannot reveal the will of the gods without enigmatic obfuscation. We are far from the truth claims of historians, based on their own observation and the testimony of human informants. To explain human suffering in the world, Hesiod offers two tales in his *Works and Days*, one the purely conventional myth of Pandora’s jar. The other story describes the five races of men, four being metallic and possibly of non-Greek origin, while a fifth race, of heroes, is interposed as a quasi-rationalized Greek reminiscence of the “heroic age” of earlier centuries. The tale of races describes the quality of periods, not a precise quantity of time, but it does show real concern for causality and is “pointing to an entirely new line of intellectual endeavour and pointing away from epic and myth,” namely an embryonic form of chronological periodization along with notions of moral decline and regeneration in successive social structures (Finley 1987: 16–17; Kirk 1973: 226–38). Another work of Hesiod, *The Catalogue of Women* (now fragmentary; possibly begun in the eighth century and reaching a final version in the first decades of the sixth, in Attica) was the best model for the breadth of the early genealogical works. Genealogy was later given fuller form by

Acusilaus of Argos (pre-490 BC), who seems to have corrected Hesiod's creation story (Bertelli 2001: 73–4; *FGrHist* 2 Acus. F 5–6).

Writing used for records seems to have first become widespread in Greece from 750 to 650 BC. Written texts appear to be more common with the advent of public inscriptions throughout the sixth century, and are finally ubiquitous in the fifth century and later. The archaic period (c. 700–500 BC) evidences the first written laws and some religious and private inscriptions. In general, however, each city's use of political documents varied greatly until the mid-fourth century BC, when bureaucratization and standardized norms took hold. Yet oral traditions and oral discourse in politics lived strongly alongside the written throughout the archaic and classical periods. Comparison with the extensive use of writing in the Near East and Egypt even suggests that written records can often foster the control required by authoritarian central rulership (Thomas 1992 *passim*, and especially 93–100, 128–50). With the advent of writing from 700 to 500 BC, Greeks first applied the medium mainly to epic, then to lyric and other forms of occasional poetry that dealt “with personal problems and generalities and not with politics and society in their concrete institutional expressions” (Finley 1987: 20–1). The Greeks of this era were not interested in the written organization and chronological tracing of events. The impulse in this direction ultimately came from the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Ionian Connection

Homer, most believe, like Hecataeus and then Herodotus, was a native Ionian. Ionia was the central region of the western coast of Asia Minor that was inhabited by independent Greek cities since at least the eighth century, then ruled by the Persians in the mid-sixth to early fifth centuries. Some critics have distinguished the East Greek or Ionian emphasis on folktales from a mainland Greek preoccupation with political rationalism, perhaps arising from the hoplite class focused on action in war and politics. Scholars have further distinguished folktales and political themes from a “Delphic tradition” that emphasized the moral aspects of *hybris* and reversal of fortune. In short, diverse local cultures have created divergent interests in discourse, first orally, then in written texts, including history. The theory goes that Thucydides' work more strongly reflects the “mainland” or hoplite culture, while Herodotus' evidences the reception of Ionian folktales, and both incorporate the Delphic lessons of *hybris* avenged (Murray 2001: 32–3).

Ionia was an extraordinarily creative culture not only for legends and poetic fictions, but also for the earliest production of new forms of critical knowledge in Greece, notably Ionian philosophy, science, and historiography (Kirk and Raven 1957: 73–215). Thales of Miletus (c. 625–c. 545 BC) led the revolution with studies of the earth and heavens, proclaiming that water was

the “first principle” of all things; Anaximander of Miletus (c. 610–c. 547 BC) also focused on natural laws of ceaseless movement expressed in the mutual destruction of opposites, but also of stability expressed in an entity he called “the unbounded” (*to apeiron*), which is the basis of all things. Xenophanes of Colophon (c. 570–475 BC) also wrote on the heavens and earth, but is known best for his skeptical position on the limits of human knowledge and the absurdity of anthropomorphic deities as Homer and Hesiod portrayed them. Heraclitus of Ephesus (fl. c. 500 BC) highlighted a central principle of cosmic order (*logos*) that is in constant change. What these thinkers contributed was some necessary, though not sufficient, conditions for the Greek creation of history, namely a skepticism about myth, an affirmation of empirical evidence, and a nascent method of inquiry (Finley 1987: 30).

While Ionia was politically subject to Persia from c. 546/5 BC until after the Persian Wars (479 BC), the region was home to major pioneers of historical genres. Scylax of Caryanda (c. 500) wrote of his sailing around the Persian Gulf and elsewhere, at the order of Darius I; Scylax also wrote a biography of a tyrant of Mylasa, another Persian subject. Hecataeus of Miletus wrote critically of Greek traditions. And then Herodotus was born (Momigliano 1990: 8–11).

Herodotus, as we shall see, drew from both of his rich local traditions – storytelling and philosophical inquiry. What he added to them was the aim of preserving “human past events” (*ta genomena ex anthōpōn*), and especially “the great and wondrous deeds” of the Greeks and barbarians, for the sake of preservation in and of itself, as his preface proclaims (1.1.1). For centuries poets had sought to preserve myths that were considered to be essentially true, but Herodotus and a few others in the decades before him attempted to organize the traditions of genealogy, local traditions, and travel stories. The adaptation of an Ionian spirit of inquiry and natural empiricism to the aim of a serious understanding of human accomplishments was the crucial turning point in the invention, or perhaps better “evolution,” of history. The change is not really the final discovery of some new mode of expression by thinkers long in search of a solution, as “invention” implies. Rather history arose as the natural next step in a chain of cultural circumstances. Herodotus had absorbed storytelling and the spirit of inquiry, but applied both to his original focus on events that were secular, political, and human; Thucydides then further filtered the genre through an even more rigid focus on these events and a more obsessive concern for chronology (Finley 1987: 30).

What was the necessary final condition for Herodotus or any author positioned at this time to apply aspects of the writing of myth and of empirical skepticism to the human past must ultimately remain a matter of speculation. Beyond the impulse to preserve deeds from oblivion, the Persian Wars themselves obviously begged for a grand treatment along the lines of the Homeric epic. But Herodotus may also have been drawn to address at epic

length a host of hot issues of the day, including civilization versus barbarism, democracy versus tyranny (versus oligarchy), law versus nature, divine versus human sources of authority, and pan-Hellenic cooperation versus strife among Greek cities.

Ionian thinkers had questioned laws of gods and nature long presumed valid, and the liberal spirit of inquiry may, some speculate, have led to a rupture of social barriers too, to a spirit of questioning of the elite hierarchies, which resulted in tyrannies and finally in the Athenian democracy (Meier 1987: 52; Roberts 2011: 12–14). The point is not that Herodotus follows or applies any of the specific Ionian monocausal explanations of natural processes, but rather that he lived in a region and a culture where diversity and innovation were also welcomed in the forms of writing and thinking.

History Prefigured or Forestalled in Archaic Poetry?

A series of poems forming what is called today the Epic Cycle were composed largely in the seventh and sixth centuries and treated a great range of legendary events, notably those around the Trojan War and the return of heroes, completing the contexts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (Davies 1989; West 1996). The epics, known entirely from scant fragments and written by authors from many different cities, evidently also covered all great mythical periods of Greece, from creation to titanomachy, and the stories of Oedipus and other Theban heroes. Epics remained a vital source of interest for Greeks from all over the Mediterranean, if their continued production is any indication. The subject matter was, in the view of most ancients, not fabulous fiction but magnified fact. Even Thucydides' serious allusions to Agamemnon and Minos, tempered by an awareness of poetic licence, make clear that, for him, the tales were essentially based on true events (Th. 1.4, 9, and 21).

In the seventh and sixth centuries the body of serious and lofty epic required balancing by literary forms that conveyed everyday concerns and elevated personal themes. Prose narratives of contemporary politics were not yet conceivable or attractive enough to be committed to papyrus: prose lacked the verve of verse and its cultural cachet, and feuding city-states were of ephemeral interest. So the archaic period found another outlet, a literary genre worth writing down, namely lyric poetry (excellent translation and selection in West 1994). The broad classification includes both choral and monodic (solo) songs, written to be performed in their entirety at public or private occasions. Monody begins usually with Archilochus and runs the gamut of Tyrtaeus, Mimnermus, Sappho, Alcaeus, Theognis, Solon, and many more. These poets' themes are largely personal and philosophically moralizing about

loves, hates, friends, enemies, and the frustrations and joys of daily life. There is little extended narration and not much on politics, but noteworthy historical nuggets abound. In the seventh century, starting with Archilochus, we glimpse the reluctant warrior fighting for Thasos against Thracian tribes (West 1994: 13–14; Bowie 2001: 59–60). Tyrtaeus of Sparta and Callinus of Ephesus offer fellow citizens propagandistic exhortations to fight in battle (West 1994: 21 and 23–7). Theognis rolls off copious advice about friends, enemies, and the welfare of his state, Megara (West 1994: 64–73; Figueira and Nagy 1985). Solon (early sixth century) was the most politically accomplished among the lyric poets, being also a famous Athenian archon (594/3 BC) and lawgiver – a “sage” figure for Herodotus. Solon’s political poems evidence his sincere efforts to reform class inequities and his frustrations at the effort (West 1994: 74–83). Our brief catalog illustrates how various poets engaged the interests of the citizenry, primarily with warnings and advice drawn from personal experience in politics and war. There is no attempt at a systematic narrative, but rather a highly individualistic view of life in the *polis*. The general absence of religious authority and mythical subject matter indicates that the monody functioned to convey secular, civic wisdom distilled from recent experience. Though monody is hugely different in form and overt subject matter from history, it functions like history by presenting experience as a lesson for civic behavior. Hence monody prefigured and perhaps forestalled the invention of history.

Choral poetry accompanied some religious worship, funerals, and weddings, as well as songs of praise for rulers (*enkomia*) and victory songs for athletes (*epinikia*) (Segal 1985). Many choral songs blended elements of myth with brief historical episodes, though ancients understood that there would be a necessary bias in poems praising the elite, the wealthy, and athletes (who often were aristocratic and monied). The choral pieces were, after all, paid for by families, clients, or the praised subjects themselves. Choral poetry thus complemented monody by weaving together epic elements of myth with contemporary realia. The genre is first attested in the poems of Alcman of Sparta (later sixth century), best known for a lovely *parthenion* or “maidens’ song” designed to accompany a cult dance, but noteworthy also for a cosmogony contrasting that of Hesiod. Stesichorus of Himera in Sicily (c. 632/629–556/553 BC) wrote mainly on mythical topics but is said to have composed fables on political topics, for instance urging the people of Akragas to reject the tyrant Phalaris so as not to become his slaves, as a wild horse does by accepting a bit (Arist. *Rh.* 2, 1393^b; see Kennedy 1991: 180).

Poetic versions of foundation stories (only the titles are extant) arose in the seventh and sixth centuries and are of more direct historical interest. In the eighth century there is the *Corinthiaca* by Eumelus of Corinth and, in the seventh, Mimnermus’ *Smyrneis* and the *Early History of the Samians* by Semonides of Amorgos, a work of over 2,000 lines. Panyassis of

Halicarnassus, fifth-century author of an *Ionica* of about 7,000 lines, was a compatriot and kinsman (uncle or cousin) of Herodotus, who may well have known the poem. A poem by Ion of Chios (480s–c. 421 BC) tells of the foundation of his city. Progress in verse seems to be from poems on a single *polis* to an “overarching narrative ... concerning several *poleis*” (Bowie 2001: 49–50). It is striking that Panyassis is the first to adapt elegy to a new form, which deals with several cities, while Herodotus seems to have been the first to move from local to pan-Hellenic prose historiography. The inclusion of affairs may, among Greek *poleis*, have been inspired by the Persian Wars, but also seems to have arisen from the typically more cosmopolitan Ionian perspective.

Recent scholarship on the papyri fragments of the choral poet Simonides of Ceos (557/556–468 BC) has highlighted the way in which lyric used historical events for its subject matter. The so-called “new Simonides” verses, usually thought to be from one single poem, praise the Greek victory in the Persian Wars at the battle of Plataea (possibly also at the battles of Salamis and Artemisium), and they do so using Homeric themes and allusions (Boedeker 1998, 2001; Kowerski 2005). The occasion for the first performance may have been the funeral of those fallen at Plataea (Aloni 1994). Simonides’ blending of the legendary Greek–Trojan War with the Greek–Persian conflict illustrates the ready association of mythical heroism with recent military events. It is instructive, if not surprising, to contrast Simonides’ unalloyed praise with Herodotus’ critical account of the Plataean conflict decades later – an account designed to illustrate division within the Greek forces. It is also significant that, like Panyassis’ multicity subject matter, Simonides’ poem is unique among extant Persian War poems in including so many allied cities by name (Boedeker 2001). Lyric poetry after the Persian Wars to the time of Herodotus (480–c. 440 BC) evidences an upsurge of interest in contemporary people, places, and events.

Victory odes (*epinikia*) were commissioned choral performances that, like Simonides’ elegy for the Plataean warriors, extolled the winners. The genre flourished brilliantly but briefly from around 550 to 450 BC. It conveyed the elite aristocratic ideal of the athlete in the image of a legendary hero and thus presented myth liberally mixed with contemporary family genealogy and achievements. Pindar (518–438 BC) is of course the master of the genre, but Bacchylides of Ceos is the other famous epinician poet, whose uncle Simonides of Ceos had also written *epinikia*. Leslie Kurke sees the *epinikia* generally as systems of exchange of symbolic capital between victor and family and between victor and his *polis*, both sides being engaged in noble gift exchange (Kurke 1991). Christian Mann emphasizes the differing political functions of the odes in each city, as in the case of Hieron of Syracuse’s use of seven songs by Pindar and Bacchylides to describe his ideology of rule (Mann 2001: 48–9; 248–73). Though victory odes in part allude to historical

events, their primary function is one remote from history's avoidance of bias, namely unqualified praise written for and paid by wealthy and powerful patrons.

Why No Historical Tragedies?

Athenian tragedy began in the 530s BC, or possibly together with democracy, around 508/7 BC, and the vast majority of tragedies dealt with heroic myths. Only three historical dramas are known: Phrynicus' *Capture of Miletus* (492 BC), his *Phoenician Women/Persians* (476 BC [?]), and Aeschylus' *Persians* (472 BC). The reasons for a virtual taboo against historical drama in Athens may include an obvious avoidance of shaming fellow Greeks in a serious, publicly performed genre; conversely, the many oblique commentaries on Greek life embedded in tragedy, famously the allusions to the Areopagus and to Ephialtes' reforms in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*; the fact that Old Comedy (mid- to late fifth century) filled the gap by parodying and ridiculing prominent men; and the coming of age of historical prose in the second half of the fifth century. In short, tragedy, comedy, and history each had different but complementary social functions, at least in Athens. The audience evidently did not seek or accept historical events being performed in the context of tragedy; it highly approved of the lampooning of current public figures in comedy during the democratic era – and yet the much more limited public treatment of political events in historical texts was perfectly acceptable.

Generally speaking for the fifth century and earlier periods, poetry and prose were considered antithetical in content: prose, including history and oratory, was the normal medium for factual discourse, while drama and other poetry conveyed broader truths. Aristotle's famous passage in the *Poetics* (1451^b) asserts that "poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history, since poetry speaks more of universals, history more of particulars." For Aristotle, the materials of poetry are, according to Stephen Halliwell (1987 ad l.), "approximating to universals" by token of their adherence to probability and necessity, not because they claim gravity and deep truth, or vision, as in a Romantic view of poetry. Behavior and experiences are understood at the level of general or universal categories (more on this in [Chapter 5](#)). Yet, in our view, data-based historical discourse could also present universally significant narratives, reflecting on typical human thoughts, feelings, and actions through its selection of crucial events and elaboration of fictionalized speech and detail. Aristotle seems to downplay the deeper meanings of historical narratives for a sharper contrast with poetry.

Falsehood and Fashioning, or Veracity, Verisimilitude, and “Versionification”

History’s subject matter comes encumbered with cultural biases and potential agendas that other genres avoided. Ancient history primarily treated the contemporary, and therefore topics much less malleable to treatment: recent individuals, deeds, and the fates of cities. For an audience with its own oral sources, accuracy, or at least plausibility, posed a problem of versions competing for validation and for support by different groups. There arose critical dissonance and the production of variant readings (we might term the process “versionification”), alternative and challenged explanations, and fame and the defamation of individuals, families, citizens, and ethnicities. (German *Fassung* conveys better than our “version” the notion of “framing” or “mounting” as a picture, or “setting” as a gemstone, or “wording” or “formulation” in writing.) In short, the political and social stakes are more immediate and subject to contention. So the historian, unlike the poet or philosopher, must be on guard and highly self-conscious about veracity, not primarily to adhere to some quasi-scientific ideal of objectivity, but to undertake personal responsibility for his own published version of a past involving persons still alive, interested, and able to gain or lose much from a particular narrative representation. Thucydides saw the historian’s problem of bias of reporting a war in which one is involved (1.21), and in public rhetoric Thucydides’ Pericles (Th. 2.35) notes the difficulty of balancing praise that will not arouse envy in the audience. (See Flory 1990 on *to muthōdes* in Thucydides 1.22.4 meaning “patriotic storytelling”; also Marincola 1997: 158–75.) “For ancient historians, [Marincola] observes, the opposite of ‘true’ is ‘biased’; and bias is seen as specifically occasioned by favours or injustices (past or anticipated). Even patriotic bias is linked with what one’s *patria* gives one” (Walbank 1997: 236).

Rhetoric and History

For the Greeks, history was a branch of rhetoric, not of the more speculative philosophy. Both prose genres relied on clear, direct expression to convey opinions and actual events. Speaking well meant speaking effectively, achieving the pragmatic purpose of persuasion in court or the assembly, exhortation in military affairs, and ceremonial exposition as in a funeral oration. Ancient theorists divided oratory into three types, judicial, deliberative, and epideictic (for “display”), and history has aspects in common mainly with the judicial and the epideictic (in its praise and blame) (Woodman 1988: 95–8). Rhetoric, like history, demands selection for a purpose and claims to be a true and objective account. But, unlike history,

rhetoric involves performance for specific occasions, does not confine itself to narratives of past events, and does not espouse preserving the fame of men for eternity. Effective public rhetoric was, of course, a way of life among the Greeks centuries before its formal theory and teaching in the fifth century, as Homer's speeches evidence. Teaching and theory began, legendarily, with Corax and Tisias in mid-fifth-century Sicily and evolved greatly in the hands of Gorgias in the later fifth century, and even more with Plato and Aristotle in the fourth. Chronologically, rhetoric actually matured as a self-conscious art contemporaneously with Herodotus and Thucydides, in the fifth century. But it is impossible to imagine Herodotus presenting the rich and polished speeches of his history without a highly sophisticated evolution of the rhetorical genre in daily practice by the era of the Persian Wars. So the mutual enrichment of rhetorical technique and historical standards of evidence came about simultaneously in the genres, despite the fact that one purported to convey the unvarnished truth and the other was known to be delivered with partisan bias, just to prove a point (Fornara 1983: 170). When we encounter speeches in ancient historians, we must be aware of several issues that modern scholars confront, specifically three questions debated for each author: truth versus invention (the degree of fidelity to the original argument – leaving aside verbatim reports, which are rare – versus the historian's adding what seemed appropriate in the situation); formal conventions (different types of conventional rhetorical speeches – debates, exhortations, exposition of facts, etc.); and how speeches mix past with present issues (using examples from history, and adopting aspects of former speeches for their own purposes) (Marincola 2007: 118–32; Fornara 1983: 142–68).

The Logographers: From the Silly to the Serious

Modern scholars have long sought to understand the beginnings of historical prose writing prior to Herodotus, in texts that survive today only in sparse fragmentary quotations. (The texts were systematically organized by Felix Jacoby in a multivolume collection, *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* [*FGrHist*], which still remains authoritative but is currently being revised by a collective of scholars. Pearson 1939 gives a still useful account of four major figures.) From the sixth to the fifth century, a series of prose authors undertook several different modes of writing about the past: genealogies from heroic times to the present, ethnographies of foreign lands, horographies or local histories recording yearly events in a city-state since its foundation, and chronographies validating time-reckoning methods by correlating events. These authors were given the name logographers (*logographoi*; also *logopoioi* or *logioi*) – that is, “story (or speech) writers” – which was meant to distinguish them from the poets. Each subgenre had its political motives: local

elite families sought validation of their lineage; cities and their peoples legitimized their origins; non-Greeks were subordinated as less civilized and strange. With Herodotus, these approaches were all united in what we might call history proper, a chronological narrative of men's deeds, usually unified around a defined period or major event.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing in the later first century BC, summarizes the names and subject matters of prominent historians writing before the Peloponnesian War. The reliability of his account in many details has been disputed, but David Toye has demonstrated that Dionysius seems mainly correct, and Jacoby mistaken in claiming that the aim of logographers is to describe heroic genealogies and early histories of an ethnos or city, and not strictly to establish a general chronology of Hellenic history (Toye 1995). The passage is quotable, as it gives a valuable ancient summary of the subjects of history prior to Thucydides' work around 400 BC:

All of these showed a like bent in their choice of subjects and there was little difference in their ability. Some wrote treatises dealing with Greek history and others dealt with non-Greek history. They did not blend these histories [into one work], but subdivided them by nations and cities and gave a separate account of each, keeping in view one single and unwavering subject, that of bringing to the common knowledge of all whatever records or traditions were to be found among the natives of the individual nationalities or states, whether recorded in places sacred or profane, and to deliver these just as they received them without addition or subtraction, rejecting not even the legends which had been believed for many generations nor dramatic tales which seem to men of the present time to have a large measure of silliness.

(D.H. *Th.* 5, Pritchett, adapted)

Dionysius highlights aspects still generally considered characteristic of these earliest historians, their focus on cities or ethnic groups, and their largely uncritical acceptance of traditional tales. What they had achieved was an attempt at reconciling various traditions and inevitably some correction of their sources. Pearson attractively suggests that the logographers' bare quoting of official records may have been for political reasons:

To glorify and magnify the past, perhaps at the expense of the present, as epic poetry did, was dangerous, if not actually forbidden under the Persian domination. But simply to tell the truth, to describe events as were described in the annals of their cities, could not possibly be considered dangerous or subversive of authority.

(Pearson 1939: 16)

Genealogies go back to Homer and the more systematic Hesiod, particularly his *Theogony* and *Catalogue of Women*. Logographers, notably Hecataeus,

were concerned with improving the continuity and synchronization of genealogical records with ample criticism of Hesiod. Several important logographers come from Ionia and reflect the intellectual revolution of that region. Hecataeus of Miletus (fl. c. 500 BC) is arguably the most significant of the logographers prior to Herodotus, and the only one cited by name by that later historian. He is the author of works embracing both geographical and genealogical interests, namely *Genealogies* or *Inquiries* (*Geneēlogiai* or *Historiai*) and *Circuit of the Earth* (*Periodos tēs gēs* or *Periodos*). The *Circuit* was, interestingly, in two books, “Europe” and “Asia” (which included Africa), a clockwise journey around the Mediterranean, perhaps inspiring Herodotus’ later ethnographic excursus. Herodotus mentions Hecataeus as a respected Milesian citizen consulted twice by the leaders of the Ionian Revolt (500–494 BC) and wisely warning against it, and once as a traveler to Egypt who describes his ancestry, sixteen generations removed from a divine forefather (Hdt. 5.36, 5.124–6, and 2.143). West 1991 questions the authenticity of these episodes on the basis of their suspiciously literary aptness, but the detail and the proximity in time to Herodotus suggest that they are probably genuine. The encounter in Egypt may reflect Hecataeus’ *Genealogies*, debunking stories such as Heracles’ labors: Geryon’s cattle were fetched from the region of Epirus and not from Iberia or elsewhere, and Cerberus is not a dog, but a poisonous snake retrieved by Heracles (*FGrHist* 1 Hecat. F 26, F 27). The involvement in the Ionian Revolt shows that he was respected by compatriots and engaged in contemporary politics.

Hecataeus’ *Genealogies* opens with a self-confident assertion relying on reason and not inspiration: “Hecataeus of Miletus speaks thus. I write what seems to be true; for the Greeks have many tales which, as it appears to me, are absurd” (*FGrHist* 1 F 1, West 1996). The author implicitly critiques a confusing mythical tradition for not applying criteria of selection of the better version; a narration had to be coherent and probable. Hecataeus mistrusted the marvelous and selected sources according to his critical judgement. To judge from Herodotus’ story of Hecataeus’ willingness to spend temple treasures to fund a navy, he was not a pious devotee of conventional religion either (Hdt. 5.36). In genealogical subject matter, Hecataeus was an heir to Hesiod, but he innovated from the “formalized social past” of the Hesiodic tradition, changing poetry to prose. Hecataeus evidences the stage of “agonistic intertextuality” (a term coined by Assmann 1992: 286–7) in the dynamic between author, predecessor, and topic, as well as between texts, object, and the criteria for assessing the truthfulness of a text. His pointing up of his own agency in writing (“I write,” *graphō*) imparts an authority to his prose medium, fixed against other poetic versions, and appeals not to tradition but to a new role of the writer as logographer. Hecataeus’ choice of prose might have come from the Milesian scientific prose in service of a new rationality, but it might also have followed the traditionally first prose author, Pherecydes of Syros (c. 544), who wrote on philosophy and mythography, close to a

genealogical treatise. Hecataeus' fixing of continuous, written lists of generations allowed the chronological calculation of present generations with the mythic past, and thus linked mythic time with historic time. The antitraditionalist Ionian poet Xenophanes (c. 570–475 BC) opened up critical attitudes to myth and, it has been suggested, he may have been the catalyst for Hecataeus' undertaking a genealogical revision (following Bertelli's perceptive analysis of Hecataeus, 2001: 67–94, for much of this section; see also Fränkel 1973: 142–7).

Hecataeus may have also led the way by including implicit political commentary in his narrative. Herodotus relates Hecataeus' account of the Athenians “unjustly” expelling the Pelasgians from Attica (Hdt. 6.137; *FGrHist* 1 Hecat. F 127). Hecataeus here seems to sympathize with the “barbarians” against the Athenians. Bertelli suggests that this reconstruction of Athenian–Pelasgian relations is done “in light of the recent [514–506 BC] expulsion of the Pelasgians from Lesbos by Miltiades” and that the historian may be critiquing the Athenian Miltiades' “tyrannical *hybris* against an innocent people.” Hecataeus again counters tradition by making Greece a barbarian colony prior to Greek settlement there, “going against the exaltation of Hellenic identity in the Homeric tradition” (*FGrHist* 1 Hecat. F 119; Bertelli 2001: 89). If Bertelli is right, Hecataeus' implicit criticism is extended to matters political, and he is all the more a precursor of Herodotus and Thucydides.

Contemporary with Hecataeus in the late sixth and first half of the fifth century is the logographer Acusilaus of Argos, whose *Genealogies* (also known as *Historiai*, *Inquiries*) covered in three books divine, heroic, and human generations (Fränkel 1973: 347–8). It proceeded from the first man, “Phoroneus,” to after the Trojan War and borrowed from conventional epic, without any evidence in the extant fragments of any rationalization or questioning of the received myths. Perhaps not coincidentally, Acusilaus lived far from the Ionian intellectual scene. From Hecataeus' high point around 500 BC we come to a cluster of historians, all from the general Ionian region and all prominent around the time of Herodotus (c. 485–424 BC), men who witnessed the turbulent fifth century. Of the many works attached to Charon of Lampsacus, only two are securely by him: *Chronicles of Lampsacus* (four books) and *Persica* (two books). The fragments of the *Persica* show a less detailed treatment of events than Herodotus' work, but a similar interest in anecdote, legends, and local traditions; they illustrate, for example, the Persian rise to power with Astyages' prophetic dream (*FGrHist* 687b F 4; cf. Hdt. 1.107–8; Meister 1996a; von Fritz 1967: 518–21; Pearson 1939: 139–51). In *Chronicles of Lampsacus* he narrates an amusing tale of how the Cardians were defeated by the commander Naris, who cleverly used flute players to disrupt the enemy cavalry (*FGrHist* 262 F 1 = Ath. 12.520D–F; Fränkel 1973: 348). The *Lydiaca* by Xanthus of Lydia in four books is a

history of the Lydian people, possibly to the capture of Sardis by Cyrus. It blended legend sometimes with empirical observation, such as in his provident hypothesis about marine fossils as evidence of sea-level change (*FGrHist* 765 F 14; von Fritz 1967: 88–9; Pearson 1939: 123). Xanthus' main contribution to advancing historiography beyond Hecataeus and in the direction of Herodotus is, to judge from the fragments, a desire to support mythical narrative with genealogical, linguistic, rationalistic, and scientific arguments (Meister 1996b; Pearson 1939: 109–38; von Fritz 1967: 88–91).

The last historian here from Ionia, Hellanicus of Lesbos (c. 480–395 BC) is said to have written numerous works, groupable as mythographic, ethnographic, and chronographic (or horographic) (Pearson 1939: 152–235; Fornara 1983: 21). Among the third group are two chronological sketches based on archival lists; the *Priestesses of Hera at Argos*, which Thucydides used (Th. 2.2.1; 4.133.2), and the *Carneian Victors* (*Karneionikai*). His most famous chronographic work is *Atthis*, an outline of Attica's history from early times to 404 BC in two books – a work criticized by Thucydides as being done “sketchily and with chronological imprecision” (Th. 1.97.2) on account of its treatment of the *pentēkontaetia* (fifty-year period) between the Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian War. Recent scholarship has even asserted that the *Atthis* was not a chronicle but a collection of random local tales and genealogy and that the Athenian Androtion (c. 410–340 BC) authored the first *Atthis* genuinely identifiable as a chronicle (Joyce 1999; Harding 1994). One fragment naming Erichthonius as the founder of the Panathenaia and another asserting the Athenian native occupation of Attica both validate civic prestige (*FGrHist* F 39 and F 161). Many of Hellanicus' attested ethnographic titles may actually be reduced to two, one on *Foundations of Peoples and Cities* (*Ktiseis ethnōn kai poleōn*) and one on *Foreign Customs* (*Barbarika nomima*) that included treatment of the Greeks in Asia Minor and of the tribes around them (Pearson 1939: 194–9). He seems also to have written separate works on the Egyptians, the natives of Lesbos, and the Persians, the last covering mythic times to the battle of Salamis. His political stance on Persia cannot be discerned from the fragments, and his methodological sophistication in general in his chronological works is to be doubted. He seems to have written much, but not very well.

Conclusions

The journey from Homer to Hellanicus is not a straight line but an evolution of genres competing and complementing one another, all at the service of audience and authorial interest. In over a century from Hecataeus to Hellanicus, the historical writing of the logographers shows a swift turn away from the enchanted poetic performance of myth to the rationalizing and

organizing principles of a new genre. Challenged by Ionian scientific and philosophical ideas and applying the skepticism and new rationalism of Xenophanes and others to traditional legends, the logographers reworked myths, genealogies, and travelers' tales. But in their obsession with the ever popular topics of myth, logographers gave short shrift to the most fruitful area for prose narrative, namely the events of recent generations, where testimonial evidence and archive promised a richer and more reliable account. The logographers also seemed shy of speeches, as if they were foreign to prose accounts. Herodotus was the first to take on the recent past in full detail. He also first incorporated rhetoric amply into his narrative, clearly drawing upon the traditions of Homeric epic, Athenian drama, and live oratory itself. Logographers seemed still to live under the primacy of a mythical canon and could not quite emerge from it. Hellanicus sought chronological anchors in timelines of priestesses and victors. Like his near contemporary Herodotus, Charon was an artful storyteller of dreams, battles, and the like and employs narrative to describe political movements. Many of these earliest prose historians were prolific in producing smaller, monograph-like studies and they aspired to rationalizing and organizing bodies of legend; but none approached the scale and scope of Herodotus' revolutionary project.

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2

Herodotus and the Limits of Happiness: Beyond Epic, Lyric, and Logography

Life and Times

A chief achievement of Herodotus was the latitude of his writing, as he went beyond local history, in contrast to predecessors, in the view of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who wrote four hundred years after him and made a point still valid today:

In contrast with these men [his predecessors], Herodotus of Halicarnassus, being a little before the Persian Wars and extending down to the Peloponnesian War, expanded and rendered more splendid the scope of the subject matter. Not deigning to write the history of a single city or a single nation, but forming the design of comprising within a single treatise many varying deeds of people of Europe and Asia, he started with the Lydian empire and brought his history down to the Persian Wars and narrated in a single work the history of the intervening period of two hundred and twenty years, and he invested his style with qualities that his predecessors had failed to acquire.

(D.H. *Th.* 5, Pritchett 1975: 3–4)

Though we are not certain about Herodotus' birth and death dates, there is general agreement that he was probably born in the midst of the Persian Wars, in the 480s BC, and died sometime after the start of the Peloponnesian War, in the 420s BC, or possibly as late as 414 BC. Herodotus was reportedly fifty-three in 431 BC (*FGrHist* 244 Apollod. F 7) and hence born about 484 BC, possibly of Carian ancestry, and definitely had an uncle, Panyassis, who was a famous epic poet. As a young adult, then, Herodotus will have been saturated with tales of the glorious Greek victory over the barbarians. As a native of Halicarnassus on the Ionian coast of Asia Minor (modern Bodrum, Turkey), he will have also been exposed from childhood to local legends of Ionian bravery and to many tales from regional travelers passing through a crucial crossroads between West Asia and Europe. After the failed coup on the local tyrant, Lygdamis, Herodotus fled to Samos, then returned for the final overthrow of Lygdamis in 454 BC (on the biography in general, see Asheri, Lloyd, and Corcella 2007: 1–7).

Herodotus traveled to Egypt at least once, for four months, in 460/59 BC (Hdt. 3.12), and likely also to Scythia, the Black Sea, Thrace, Macedonia, and the Near East, including to Babylon, Tyre, and the Euphrates at some point. We may presume that Herodotus visited sites crucial to the war in mainland Greece and in Greek colonies in Asia Minor, Southern Italy, and Sicily. He knew only Greek and was at the mercy of his guides in non-Greek lands, as the account of Egypt makes clear.

Two ancient sources report that the historian visited Athens around 446 BC and received an enormous cash prize of ten talents for his public reading (Plu. *Mal. Herod.* 26; Jer. *Chron.*, under the year 446). These ancient reports, written centuries later, must of course be assessed with caution, since details might well have been invented to explain perceived biases of the narrative. Though we cannot be certain whether Herodotus met Sophocles and Pericles on his Athenian sojourn, as some ancient sources maintain, his work reflects an engaged interest in tragedy and in the aggressive imperialism of Periclean Athens (Chiasson 2003; Tracy 2002; Raaflaub 2002). The author at times writes with an eye to an Athenian audience, for example comparing Scythian geography to Attica's (4.99.4) and mentioning the chains of Boeotian captives displayed on the Acropolis even in his own day (5.77.4). Some speculate that Herodotus was made an "honorary citizen" from evidence of his tone of apology for Athens. But a careful reading reveals mixed praise for both Athenians and Spartans. In the *Acharnians* (lines 523ff.; cf. Hdt. 1.4), of 424 BC, Aristophanes evidently parodied Herodotus' introduction, which suggests that the work was publicly available, in whole or part, at this time. Herodotus' latest internal reference mentions an incident of 430 BC (Hdt. 7.137), confirming Dionysius of Halicarnassus' remark that he lived "into the Peloponnesian War" (D.H. *Th.* 5). The tradition is that he moved to Western Greek lands, Magna Graecia, to participate in the colonization of Thurii in 433 BC, where he died. The year of his death is disputed, though most scholars currently put it at about 424 BC.

The historian's vision is very much a product of his travels and experiences of different Greek and Mediterranean regions. It is of course also fostered by his own fervent sense of inquiry and his interaction with the intellectual and cultural currents of his time. He was, above all, an independent thinker, and at Thurii, a Mecca for Ionian intellectuals, he could maintain a distance from pro- or anti-Athenian partisanship. He could at once praise pan-Hellenic cooperation and admire the ethos of some barbarians, espouse democratic ideals, and denounce imperialism (Munson 2003: 267–8). Toward the end of his life and his writing, the historian witnessed the first years of the Peloponnesian War; but he also knew well the decades leading up to the conflict, and both perspectives likely informed his work, critical as it was of the Athenian accumulation of imperial power.

Composition and Structure

Herodotus' work begins with a proem that deserves close reading, here in a fairly close, literal rendering:

This is the presentation of the investigation of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, provided in order that the past events of men should not be effaced by time and that men's great and astonishing accomplishments, some of them produced by the Greeks and others by the barbarians, should not be without fame, their other accomplishments included but especially the cause why they came to fight one another.

(Hdt. 1.1, proem)

In the Greek text, Herodotus' name and city come first, but he does not, like Hecataeus, make himself the subject of the action of writing. Instead he distances himself twice from the events recorded by emphasizing both his "investigation" (*historiē*) and his "presentation" (*apodexis*; also "production," "performance," "publication"). He displays only a portion of the information gathered, and the investigative process assures readers that he took pains to discover the truth, not saying simply, as did Hecataeus a half century earlier, "I write what seems to be true," albeit on the more distant subject of legends. Herodotus' immense and innovative project is justified in two lengthy clauses, first as seeking to preserve human past events from gradual "erasure" over time. Second, alluding to the "imperishable fame" sought by epic heroes, he wants to provide "fame" for the "great and astonishing accomplishments" (*erga* embraces both deeds and physical monuments) of Greeks and non-Greeks. Finally, among the deeds lies especially the "reason" or "cause" (*aitiē*) why the two peoples fought one another – in other words, the causes of the Persian Wars. "Great and astonishing" and "cause" are charged words, which indicate the criteria for the historian's selection of subject matter and are dependent on the author's subjective judgment. What determines magnitude? Extent of wealth or power, or seriousness of consequences? What makes accomplishments astonishing (*thōmasta*): the unparalleled nature of the achievement or the degree of good done or harm caused? The very ambiguity of these terms seems deliberate, allowing for all the options mentioned above, as is evident in the narrative itself. Most notably, "astonishing" events include many acts of unrestrained cruelty, greed, ambition, and revenge, from which readers can draw positive lessons. How is the reader to understand the "cause" of the war? Was the motivation for conflict military, political, territorial, religious, personal, or ethnic tension? Exploration of causation, even more than the fighting itself, occupies a great portion of the work. The causation, like the astonishing deeds, is often tied to human nature in its baser and nobler aspects, as defined by Greek values.

Herodotus' fundamental originality and his greatest contribution to the genre rest not on the unity or fragmentation of his work, but rather on his being the

first Greek, indeed the first Western writer, to attempt and accomplish a prose narrative of such ambitious length, and the first to describe with relatively great detachment a clash of contemporary civilizations. In choice of subject and scale of work he established a pattern for centuries of successors. It is difficult to think away nearly two and a half millennia of historical texts that followed Herodotus and to appreciate the revolutionary step he took in selecting his topic, finding a method, and forging a style.

Some scholars, with a so-called unitarian approach, have seen the *Histories* as essentially cohesive in concept, narrative technique, historical method, and the relation of parts to the whole; other critics – “analysts” – have emphasized gaps and contradictions in the narrative, shifting interests, and the supposed absence of a central theme. Recently the unitarian and the analyst approaches have been reconciled by a growing number of scholars acknowledging the author’s consistent desire to serve two aims. First, he presents the results of his observation of diverse, noteworthy deeds and, second, he reveals historical causation to be based in the deeper human realities of cultural differences and commonalities, emotional and rational motivations, and in the natural arc of growth and decline of the great powers. Both aims are implicitly stated in Herodotus’ preface. But he is neither hopelessly mired in irrelevancies nor aloft in grand theory. His obsession with seemingly irrelevant details never strays far from the focus on human motives, and his search for the causes of conflict never reaches the unified theory of a coherent philosophy or ideology. Much is left to the attentive reader, who has to connect the narrative episodes with broader themes or to take stories as remarkable on their own merit.

The disjointed and the unified approaches, then, with varying shades in between, have been related to three prevalent theories concerning the composition of the work, namely that (1) Herodotus wrote the ethno-geographical sections on Egypt and Scythia earlier in his career and later decided to write on the Persian Wars and incorporate those studies into it; or (2) he wrote the later books on the Persian Wars proper first (Books 6–9) and later added the earlier parts to complement the war motifs; or (3) he wrote a single, unedited first draft, “correcting in stride” as he proceeded. Richmond Lattimore was the first to propose the third scenario, and it still has many adherents (Lattimore 1958; see Lateiner 1989: 2–6 on unitarians vs. analysts, and for an overview of composition theories). The single-draft theory has the virtue of explaining how such a long work could have the unity it does, with themes in the early books being recalled in the latter ones. But most who see an overall unity in the work allow that there may well have been revisions. As a youth, Herodotus was undoubtedly fascinated by tales of glorious victory in the immediate aftermath of the war. He plausibly also heard or read the accounts of Ionian geographers, ethnographers, and philosophers, and yearned to incorporate both his ethnographic and political interests into one narrative. Herodotus was in effect declaring, by the very length and breadth of his scope,

that his project rivaled those of the epic poets. Like Hecataeus', his prose venture challenged the content and form of the poetic compositions that had dominated until this time.

The narrative can be very generally divided into six sections:

1. Croesus–Cyrus: 1.7–94;
2. Cyrus: 1.95–140; conquest of Asian Greeks: 1.141–77;
3. empire of Cyrus–Cambyses–Darius: 1.178–5.27 (including the digression on Egypt in Book 2);
4. the Ionian Revolt: 5.28–38; its suppression: 5.97–6.42; Marathon: 6.94–120;
5. Xerxes' accession; preparations; Artemisium, Themopylae: 7.196–239; Salamis: 8.40–112; return of Xerxes: 8.113–32;
6. Plataea: 9.1–89; Mycale: 9.90–106.

The many stories (*logoi*) and the smaller narratives that comprise each section follow a general unity owing to chronology, connections through kinship of rulers, and a causal chain of action and reaction among states. The pattern is set with the earliest legendary account of the abduction of elite women (Io, Europa, Medea, and Helen, at Hdt. 1.1–5) and escalates into the Persian expeditions as the reprisals for Greek offenses against Persia in Ionia. The events in Book 1 begin in the sixth century, with the rise of Croesus, king of Lydia, his fall, the Persian annexation of Lydia, and the imperialist expansion of Persia under Cyrus, who died in 530 BC. Book 2 largely digresses on the culture of Egypt; this is occasioned by the Persian expansionist aims in that country under Cambyses, Cyrus' successor. In Book 3, when Cambyses fails to take Nubia and is succeeded by Darius I, we find a crucial debate on the possible constitutional changes within the empire (3.88–97). Book 4 recounts Darius' attempts to subdue the Scythians of the Danube region and in Southern Russia, but again indulges in extensive cultural commentaries on those nomadic peoples. The Ionian Revolt of Greek cities in the Eastern Mediterranean is the highlight of Book 5, along with the Athens' failed attempt to help, which gives the Persians a pretext to invade the Greek mainland (5.97–103). The defeat of Darius' forces at Marathon in 490 BC constitutes the apex of Book 6 and leads to the campaigns by Xerxes in 480–479 BC, with their five great battles on land and sea – in Books 7, 8, and 9.

Oswyn Murray (2001: 31–2) plausibly locates the two impulses of Herodotean narrative, analytical causation and storytelling, on the one hand in a mainland tradition of the political, especially hoplite, class with an interest in rationalism, military action, decision making, and human causation, and on the other hand in an Eastern Greek tradition emphasizing “folk-tale motifs, recurrent patterns, and deformation for moral ends.” This dualism, which

should not be taken too reductively, offers plausible sources for the historian's approach: the rationalist aspect interested in human character and the drive for power, and the storytelling aspect manifest in the engaging tales of the narrative. Of course the mainland rationalism and the Eastern storytelling traditions describe modes of narration that reflect and complement, but do not map neatly onto, the two "aims" outlined in the prologue and discussed above, namely the rational search for causation and the recounting of amazing deeds or customs.

The foundations of Herodotus' work in the Ionian science and logography of his day were outlined in the previous chapter. Reflecting these models, his inquisitive work seeks clearer bases of truth in a world obscured by abundant cultural diversity and contradictory customs. While the text draws distinctions between myth and empirical observations, it also does not hesitate to present multiple, subjective perspectives based on different cultural traditions.

Regarding the Ionian "scientific revolution" of the late sixth and early fifth centuries BC, we might pose the unanswerable question: Why did the marriage of science and historical prose narrative not occur even earlier than Herodotus? Partly the inspiration for Greek nonfictional narrative may have been the Persian Wars themselves, which created a new epic legend, but one told from many conflicting perspectives by Greek cities. Partly Attic democracy and oratory may have fostered the investigation of contemporary events. Herodotus was on the other hand not entirely in step with the new Ionian thought that questioned the predetermined laws of gods and nature (Meier 1987: 52). The historian seems to have been conservative on these issues and to have held to certain fixed laws of divine and natural behavior, such as the inevitability of cycles of rise and fall in individual and collective human enterprise and the regularity of cosmic justice, in which retribution follows transgressions of human *hubris*. His scientific conservatism is balanced by a yearning to learn about and record myriad cultural conventions, mores, or, in Greek parlance, "unwritten laws," *agraphoi nomoi*.

Herodotus does not explicitly state his programmatic method of assessing the truth, as Thucydides does, and so our understanding of his mode of testing sources must be inferred from particular passages. In some cases he felt that an account had probability, and at times he was certain that a report was true. For instance, Herodotus presents the discrepancies between the Egyptian and Homeric versions of the story of Helen's sojourn in Egypt (Hdt. 3.116–20; Hunter 1982: 52–61). Interestingly, the historian sides with the version of the Egyptian priests, on the basis of probability and reliability: they had knowledge derived from age-old eyewitness testimony and native tradition, as well as a serious valuation of records in Egypt. The careful choice of one version over another reveals the author's fundamental method of testing the reliability of a story and of deciding more and less accurate versions, even of distant legend.

Herodotus used all the same rational processes that we have observed in the preserved traces of the Ionian philosophers, Hecataeus, and others logographers, reasoning from observable evidence, self-observation, and deduction based on probability. For example, in 2.44, the historian, “wishing to know something certain” about the antiquity of Heracles, journeys to Tyre in Phoenicia and to Thasos, where he visits temples and concludes: “My present research shows clearly that Heracles was an old god.” In 2.31, on the other hand, Herodotus says, of the lack of a reliable account concerning the source of the Nile, that “no one can speak with certainty” about it. When describing the customs of the Persians (Hdt. 1.131–40), Herodotus again makes the distinction between clear truth and supposition: “These are the things I hold true about them, knowing enough to say. However, following are those matters which are secret and not clearly known about the dead” (Hdt. 1.140). Although Herodotus does not present an explicit, self-conscious statement about his method, the principles we find by inference in his text indicate an earnest attempt to discern consistently truths, lies, and uncertainties.

We must distinguish the historian’s own espoused view of truth and falsehood from what we today consider historical accuracy in his account. Detlev Fehling’s (1989) book, first published in German in 1971, strikingly challenged the historian’s credibility by arguing that his attribution of oral sources (“the Persians say,” “the Spartans say”) are chosen to give invented statements a cloak of respectability. This of course led to controversies in which W. K. Pritchett (1993) defended Herodotus, attributing the inaccuracies to his misunderstanding of non-Greek sources or to his imprecise recollection of details. Our interests here are less concerned with the establishment of empirical fact by current standards than with an appreciation of how an ancient historical narrative presents an author’s coherent worldview to his contemporaries. In origin, historical writing was, certainly for the Greeks and Romans, a branch of rhetorical exposition – whose success rested more in its ability to persuade than in telling the truth, to describe things in general terms if not in precise detail (Woodman 1988). In the postmodernist analysis of history in Hayden White’s *Metahistory* of 1973 and in the writings of Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and others, the historical writer ultimately has no claim to objective truth, but only to a socially determined and personally inscribed relativistic account. The cultural and personal biases implicit in the selection, arrangement, and incorporation of overall themes is anything but pristinely objective in this version of historical accounts, which began in the West with Herodotus. We can take here an intermediate position, by acknowledging the inevitably subjective elements of historiography yet at the same time agreeing upon the widely incontrovertible and uncontroversial factual bases of a proposed historical account.

The closest that Herodotus comes to a statement of programmatic method

occurs at the start of Book 1, just after an account of the legendary reprisals and abductions of European and Asian women, beginning with the abduction of Helen:

These are the stories of the Persians and Phoenicians. For my part I am not going to say about these matters that they happened thus or thus, but I will set myself upon that man that I myself know began unjust acts against the Greeks, and, having so marked him, I will go forward in my account, covering alike the small and great cities of mankind. For of those that were great in earlier times, most have now become small, and those that were great in my time were small in the time before. Since, then, I know that man's good fortune never abides in the same place, I will make mention of both alike.

(Hdt. 1.5, Grene)

This passage is almost a second preface, picking up the theme of the “cause” for the Persian–Greek conflict mentioned at 1.1. The statement at 1.5 provides the origin of European–Asian hostilities, justifies the broadly inclusive subject matter of cities large and small, which represent all human cultures, and summarizes the typical human condition of an insecure fortune for both states and individuals.

In his efforts to forge a new form of narrative, and one that was also the longest prose text of its time, Herodotus has been compared to a Menelaus-like hero who wrestles with a Protean mass of inchoate material in order to display the complexity and ambiguity of events, without bringing neat unity to the material and in the absence of the authorial mastery seen in Thucydides (Dewald 1987: 147). Carolyn Dewald detects in the historian – or *histōr* in the original Greek term – four complementary “voices” or perspectives, namely those of the onlooker, the eyewitness investigator, the critic, and the writer, all working together to preserve the authentic views of the different sorts of stories he tells. Each identity does a different job, seeing the material as a “man-in-the-street” would, or again as an interviewer emphasizing the complexity of events, or as a critic sifting the quality of data, or, finally, as a self-conscious commentator on the narrative structure or the material's suitability for his text. Some have also observed that the *Histories* undergo a kind of shift in narrative organization, whereby Books 1–6 are less tight in focus than Books 7–9. The earlier books evidence more ethnographic and genealogical digressions and set the stage for the great conflict, while the latter ones focus on the eventual collision of the Greeks and Persians (Szegedy-Maszak 1987).

In his style and structure, the author famously employs stories (*logoi*) that seem to be strung together like beads on a necklace, sometimes with tenuous connections. All are apparently united by the goal of explaining the diverse motivations for the ultimate conflict – the central story. One of Herodotus'

main achievements, argues Egbert Bakker (2006), is in linking the component stories at their junctures in such a way that they flow from one to another and preserve some continuity with the main narrative. The fact that the text is voluminously inclusive of ethnographic descriptions, legends, local tales, and political and military intrigue belies the fact that it is to a degree a “raw” and yet unhomogenized genre that becomes much more narrowly defined by Thucydides. Among the “stringing” techniques are digressions (sometimes called excursus) – sections that appear as diversions or “sidebar” points of focus and ultimately return to the main narrative. The digression has the effect of both giving relief to and illuminating the principal story, adding interesting but less relevant factual oddities, and affording important background stories, such as the summary of recent events at Athens and Sparta (Hdt. 1.59–68). Another technique is that of ring composition, which is typically Homeric and has been seen as an archaic aspect of Herodotus’ style. This technique is well suited to the digressive material found in the historian, assigning as it does clear verbal signposts of sentences or phrases at the beginning of a section and a summary at the end (Immerwahr 1966: 11–16, 54–8). The “ring” may have multiple levels of frame; it may be in the classic format – inverted (chiasmic) order, abc–cba – but it has many variants. H. R. Immerwahr (1966) carefully and reasonably mapped out the “units of the work,” including the major ring stories – for example the Croesus story (Hdt. 1.6–94), within which are embedded individual ring stories on the prior and current political strength of Athens and Sparta (1.59–65 and 1.65–8). The lengthy excursus on Egypt is implanted in the campaign of Cambyses.

One of Herodotus’ major innovations was the successful incorporation of speeches: extensive direct quotations in the manner of those of drama and epic. There is little evidence for dialogue or direct speech in the fragments of the logographers, but after Herodotus every Greek historian uses it. So the technique novel to this author borrows from poetry, and of course takes shape from contemporary oratory. He makes no self-conscious defense for the inclusion of speeches, as Thucydides does (Th. 1.22), but he seems to expect that his readers will understand and accept the convention from the other genres as a means of enlivening the narrative and of making it a virtual reenactment of the original expressions. A speech or, at times, a letter in his text is not to be understood as a verbatim record, we may infer, but as a performance of the past introduced in order to illuminate character and action. Speeches may be short or lengthy set pieces, alone or in debate format, or they may be dialogues among main characters. They do not just serve to explain the thinking and strategies of the historical agents, though this they often do. They also serve as part of the action of the narrative, revealing the decision-making process, the manner in which mistakes were made, human emotion, the wisdom or lack of it in individuals, and the overt lies or dissimulation seen in contrast with a person’s actions or words elsewhere. Speeches therefore demand the full attention and engagement of the reader, begging us to detect

ironies and the truth in its complex and indirect presentation (Pelling 2006: 116–17; Lateiner 1989: 19–26).

Theme 1: Human Nature and Happiness

We turn now to consider two motifs of this study, power and human nature, as constant concerns among Greek historians, starting here with the Herodotean portrayal of what defines a good life. The first great set of speeches takes place between the Athenian sage Solon and the Lydian king Croesus, representatives, respectively, of wisdom and the West, power or wealth and the East (Hdt. 1.30–2; Pelling 2006: 104–6). Solon illustrates, to the king's dissatisfaction, a virtual Herodotean credo of what constitutes the best life. The happiest lives are not those lived with the greatest wealth or power, but those of people of moderate means who have good health, a good family, fair fame among fellow citizens, and a good death:

but wait till he is dead to call him [blessed], and till then call him not blessed but lucky. Of course it is impossible for one who is human to have all good things together, just as there is no country that is sufficient of itself to provide all good things for itself; but it has one thing and not another, and the country that has the most is best. So no single person is self-sufficient; he has one thing and lacks another. But he whoso possesses most of them, continuously, and then ends his life in good favor, he, my lord, may justly win this name you seek – at least in my judgment.

(Hdt. 1.32, Grene, adapted)

Croesus famously ignores this wisdom, then misinterprets a Delphic oracle predicting his defeat by Persia: “After Solon was gone, a great visitation of evil [*nemesis*] from the god laid hold of Croesus, and one may guess that it was because he thought he was of all mankind the most blessed” (Hdt. 1.34, Grene). In the end, the Lydian realizes his folly and is spared by Cyrus, who sympathizes with his reversal of fortune. The Solonian speech and the subsequent story of Croesus delineate a great human truth regarding the higher value of nonmaterial aspects of life and the mutability of fortune, for the wealthy and the nonwealthy alike. They also illustrate a major failure of communication, in which the main speaker presents tenets of absolute truth that the listener completely, foolishly, and rudely rejects.

The letter of Amasis, king of Egypt, to Polycrates, tyrant of Samos, for instance, again offers its recipient a tragic warning and a central Herodotean theme:

your great pieces of good fortune do not please me. For I know that divinity is a jealous power ... I have never yet heard in story of anyone

whose fortune was complete and who did not end up in complete ruin ...
Think what it is that you find to be of utmost worth to you ... and cast it
away to where it will never again come to the world of men.

(Hdt. 3.40, Grene)

Creating one's own misfortune will presumably avert divine disfavor. In the event, Polycrates throws away his favorite ring, which is then returned to him fortuitously in the belly of a fish. The Greek misreads the sign as a divine favor, while Amasis knows it means the dire fate to which Polycrates eventually succumbs (Hdt. 3.125–6). Examples of the dynamic and dramatic force of speeches abound, and more will be examined below, but the point here is that speeches can convey important thematic truths, they can trigger actions, reactions, or non-action in response to advice that allows readers to evaluate the sagacity or folly of the historical agents.

These key passages in the first chapters of Book 1, in the Solon and Croesus story, and in the tale of Polycrates and Amasis delineate a Herodotean “anthropology” that sees individual life as an event partly self-controlled, partly at the hands of an obscure fate, happiness being unpredictable; the task of the historian is to lay out a past cycle of human affairs, or even a “circle game.” One scholar argues that Herodotus presents a “monistic principle encompassing the past and the whole range of human experience” that is in tension with “the wonderful,” a joy in the discovery of pragmatic, particular knowledge (Wecowski 2004: 143–64). According to this view, the “wisdom literature” of the storytelling author exists in an original and productive tension with the polymathy of the writer who reflects the Ionian sciences, a point echoed by Murray’s (2001) thesis noted earlier.

Theme 2: Power

Next to the Herodotean theme of the cycles of life we find that of the cycles of power, alluded to in the programmatic [chapter 5](#) of Book 1, quoted above. Since the theme of power is crucial not only to Herodotus but also to most of the historians discussed here, we offer some generic considerations on power and the ancient historian. Power is typically accepted as a relational and reciprocal phenomenon, one in which those empowered and those subject to power need to be identified and in which the relationship between the parties usually involves a common need, owing to which the parties cooperate or come into conflict. Of course the sources of power are many, including delegated authority (as in democratic or republican structures), class, popularity, skills, knowledge, wealth, force or might, and the moral suasion of a group (religious, cultural, etc.).

In a simplified form, the essential model of political power relationship

usually includes (1) the social or political affiliation of a greater power and of a lesser power party; (2) an instruction to the less powerful to accomplish something; and (3) the response of the subject, who either (a) accomplishes the request or (b) refuses or resists it. In the relationship, the degree of power of each party often corresponds to the degree of voluntary cooperation or resistance. The tone or the rhetoric used in the request may vary depending on the inclination of the person empowered or on the subordinate's degree of acquiescence. The measure of consent or acquiescence is determined by the understanding of the lesser power regarding either the right of the demanding party (as in the Melos episode in Thucydides' Book 5) or the appropriateness of the action (a model being Antigone in Sophocles' eponymous play). Finally, political power is not entirely coercive but is usually somewhat so; the few rule through the consent of the many, who feel that power is justly exercised or fear that it represents a threat to their well-being (Benn 1967; see also the classic study of French and Raven 1959).

Our concern in the context of ancient historians is mainly political and military power (usually tightly connected). Political–military power need not be restricted by moral considerations, as the philosophies of Machiavelli and Hobbes demonstrate. In the popular formulation, power politics, *Machtpolitik*, thus endorses the principle “might makes right” – a kind of social Darwinism in which the strongest always rule. Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic* is the most famous ancient proponent of this view: “justice is nothing but the interest of the stronger” (Pl. *R.* Book 1, 338c ff.; Guthrie 1971: 88–97). But often those subject to the empowered call into question the relation of power to morality in political and social contexts. Appeals to justice and fairness are invoked by the ruled when the rulers themselves are thought to exercise inequitable or tyrannical power.

The most general Greek term for “power,” *dunamis*, encompasses the meanings of bodily strength, authority, military force, capacity, capability, and so on. Politically Herodotus uses it of authority, for example of Cyrus at 1.90. Another term, *kratos*, encompasses a somewhat narrower range, has connotations of force or violence, and is predominantly used of might, bodily and military strength, and rule or sovereign power over others. The deity Kratos is personified as the agent of Zeus' punishing authority in the opening lines of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*. But to these two terms we could add a host of others that describe the rich nuances of “power” in the Greek lexicon, for example *ischus* (natural or political “force”), rarer in Herodotus but more frequent in its verbal form (*ischuō*, *ischuein*, “to restrain” or “seize”; see Hdt. 1.62.1; 2.119.2, etc.) and in its adjectival form (*ischuros*, “strong” or “mighty” – said of friends, enemies, peoples, etc.).

All of these terms show a general Greek concern with the anatomy of power, framed differently by each author. Plato ties it to justice and Aeschylus to an authority wielded by Zeus. Herodotus implies an ultimate divine justice that

balances humans' overreach. Our following discussion of the sequential narrative of Herodotus will therefore examine more closely some of the fundamental stories that illustrate his concern with and representation of power, as well as his views on human nature and its relation to the divine.

Themes, “Top Stories,” and the Logic of *logoi*

We turn now to some major sections of the work as it is structured, signposting some key passages that reflect the themes just outlined. Motifs related to human nature include: the historian as performer of human events (Gyges and Candaules); expansionism generally motivating states; greed, ambition, and vengeance in personal motivations; notions of fate and divinity as metaphysical forces to be reckoned with; cultural diversity and ethno-geography as contributing factors to conflict and cooperation in the ancient Mediterranean. Regarding Herodotus on power, many (most prominently Fornara) have shown how the *Histories* can be read as a covert critique of late fifth-century Athenian imperialism. The present discussion will include that important view, but will emphasize the broader utility of the work as a discourse on the tragic fragility of human happiness, the need to realize human limitations in the face of greater metaphysical forces, and the espousal of traditional Greek values.

Book 1

The power motif begins, as do many origins in Greek culture, with mention of the Trojan War and how Greeks “destroyed the power [*dunamin*] of the Trojan king Priam” (Hdt. 1.4), and it ends of course with the defeat of the Persians at Plataea and Mycale (Hdt. 9.16–101). Next, the narrative of how Croesus came to be the first “barbarian” man to “subdue some of the Greeks to the payment of tribute” leads to the classic tale of Gyges and Candaules (Hdt. 1.8–12). The latter, despot of Sardis, compelled his reluctant bodyguard, Gyges, to take a glance at the despot’s wife, the most beautiful woman on earth. When Candaules’ wife catches Gyges looking at her naked, she forces him either to kill Candaules and inherit the kingdom, or himself to be killed. This episode is arguably “programmatic” in illustrating Candaules’ *erōs*-blinded passion (Hdt. 1.8.1) and the perversity of his request (against laws of nature or culture?): “Many are the fine things discovered by men of old, and among them this one, that each one should look upon his own only” (Hdt. 1.8.4). The passage is a bookend to the story of Xerxes lusting after the wife of his brother Masistes in Book 9 (Hdt. 9.108–13). Lust and a passion for power are intentionally entwined in these introductory tales, to point to the

empire-changing consequences of situations when fundamentally good laws are despotically subverted.

Then, amid the story of Solon and Croesus, Gyges' successor as regent of Sardis, comes that of Adrastus, a man who accidentally kills Croesus' son and then kills himself as one "heaviest stricken by calamity" of all men (Hdt. 1.36–45). Despite an admonitory dream and Adrastus' apprehensions, we witness the inexorability of fate in the Herodotean universe.

The tale of Croesus resumes when the king sees "growth of the power of the Persians" and reflects on how to forestall this increase in power (Hdt. 1.46). He decides to attempt to depose Cyrus I, and then tests which oracle was most reliable in assuring him that his aim is viable. Relying on the Pythia at Delphi, Croesus asks whether he shall make war on the Persians and receives the reply that, if he made war on the Persians, he would "destroy a mighty empire [*archēn*]" (Hdt. 1.53), which the reader knows ironically portends the fall of Croesus' own great empire. The misinterpretation is explicitly recalled again later, at 1.71, using "power" (*dunamin*) instead of "empire" (*archēn*). Then, after the fall of Sardis in the hands of the Persians, Croesus sends Lydians to Delphi to ask the oracle why he was misled after being told he would destroy "Cyrus' power" (Hdt. 1.90). In reply, the oracle quotes the words about destroying an "empire" (*archēn*) and says that Croesus should have asked which one. The oracle explains that Croesus was fated to suffer for the crimes of his ancestor of five generations earlier, Candaules, for slaying his master Gyges. Cyrus takes pity on the fallen despot:

[Cyrus] recognized that he too was a man and it was another man, no whit less in great fortune than himself, whom he was giving alive to the fire ... he was afraid of what he must pay in retribution and thought again how nothing of all that is in the world of men could be secure.

(Hdt. 1.86, Grene)

But has Croesus really learned? He finally blames "the god of the Greeks," the oracle, for the mistake: "for no one is so foolish, of himself, to prefer war to peace." We readers see even then that the king has not recognized his own faulty judgment.

The Croesus legend is a classic and paradigmatic lesson of human tragedy and understanding, of how a people's collective fortunes are hampered by individual ambition. The episode also highlights the religious dimension, a kind of "fate," that Herodotus consistently shows behind human affairs. The well-known formulation seen in Greek epic and tragedy and amenable to Herodotus' narrative traces the sequence *hubris*–*atē*–*nemesis* (insolent violence–blind folly–retribution): the tragic figure is led astray by some innate fault (*hamartia*, literally a "missing the mark," most commonly seen as a display of *hubris*). Imperial rule, this story implies, is denied due to human insolence.

Alongside the Croesus story are digressions on and effectively introductions to the other “power players” of the period, the Athenians and Spartans. We learn of Pisistratus’ being first ousted by the competing factions of Megacles and Lycurgus, then restored by plotting a ruse in which a girl, Phya, poses as the goddess Athena in a chariot that returns Pisistratus to rule (Hdt. 1.60). After another interlude of falling out with other factions and living in Eretria for ten years, Pisistratus takes the city (Hdt. 1.63), and roots his “tyranny” (*turannis*, a term for monarchy or despotism, not necessarily pejorative) in Athens. The Lacedaemonian (Spartan) narrative also highlights the establishment of good laws by “Lycurgus” (Hdt. 1.65); Sparta is temporarily defeated and under the rule of Tegea and then, following an oracle’s advice in the time of Croesus, defeats Tegea. Again, collective success is established by the wise strategy of men adhering to divine guidance.

King Astyages, who ruled the Median empire and married Croesus’ sister, had a dream of his daughter, Mandane, giving birth to a vine that shaded all of Asia, which was taken to mean that she would produce a child who would replace him as king (Hdt. 1.108). He sent his general Harpagus to kill the child whom she eventually had by Cambyses, namely Cyrus II (the Great). But the child is saved, and eventually Astyages recognizes the boy (Hdt. 1.116). In his fury with Harpagus, he feeds the man a meal of his own son (Hdt. 1.119). When Astyages is eventually deposed and captured, he is confronted by Harpagus. Astyages calls Harpagus the stupidest man alive, since he “turned over the power [*kratos*] to someone else” (Cyrus) rather than keep it himself, and the most unjust man, since he enslaved the Medes to the Persians rather than turn the kingship (*basilēiēn* “royal power”) over to another Mede (Hdt. 1.129). Here *kratos* and *basilēiē* are synonyms. Astyages’ reproach to Harpagus is confirmed in the next chapter: “Later the Medes repented that they had yielded to the Persians” (Hdt. 1.130, Grene). The point of the narrative is that, despite Astyages’ despotic, cruel punishment, his disloyal compatriot was blinded by a motive of vengeance so as not to act most prudently for his own people, depriving them of self-rule. It is a lesson in the personal motive obscuring the greater realities of political power.

Near the end of Book 1, Herodotus addresses the “power of Babylon” in a brief excursus (191–9). In 1.191–2 we read that “in power [*dunamis*], Assyria [= Babylon] counts as one third of all of Asia” supplying the Persian king with tribute for four of the twelve months of the year. “The rule [*archē*] of Babylon, which the Persians call a satrapy, is by some great measure the strongest [*kratistē*] of all rulerships [*apaseōn tōn archeōn*] [under Persian sovereignty]” (Hdt. 1.192.2). Here “power” (*dunamis*) indicates wealth, resources, and political importance, while “rule” (*archē*) is applied to political governance, and the strength of the rule is measured by its resources and strategic significance.

Book 2

The power and wonder of Egypt occupy the anomalous Book 2, which some have speculated to be a separate work of Herodotus woven into the *Histories*. In any case it is a superb illustration of his most “anthropological” bent and may well reflect his travels to that land. His principal method is that of polarity, in which Egypt is paired against Greece. The contrary things are “wonders,” *thōmasia*. Points of comparison include women and religion (Lateiner 1989: 147–52). *Nomos*, the slippery Greek term meaning “custom,” “convention,” and “law” (and more), is one Herodotean touchstone for distinguishing one culture from another. Furthermore, *nomos* becomes thematically important as a geographically conditioned factor (see Xenophanes, Fr. 21 B 16 DK, followed by Hecataeus), a discovery broadened by the Persian War experience and “the sudden intrusion of Persians and their peoples into the narrow Aegean orbit” (Lateiner 1989: 151). The Egyptians are another case study for *nomos* and geography. In some ways Herodotus leans toward a sense of relativism in (or, better, equal respect for) each culture’s customs: “I am not anxious to expound the divine matters in the accounts I have heard (apart from the divine names that they have used), since I believe that all men have an equal sense [*ison ... epistasthai*] of them” (Hdt. 2.3.2). Compare 3.38.1–2, where the historian says that, if mankind were asked which customs (*nomoi*) are the finest, each group would pick its own. We should not, however, press this “relativism” too far, since Herodotus does not usually make judgments on the idiosyncratic actions of a people, but on the general ethical and rational rectitude of human custom and action, censuring, for example, those led on by selfish ambition, lust, and so on.

The story of the Nile occupies 2.13–34, and the great river itself is shown to have a peculiar “power” (*dunamis*), opposite in nature to that of most rivers, whereby the river is smaller in winter and greater in summer (Hdt. 2.19). The “wonders of Egypt” are surveyed at 2.35–6 and, of the twenty-six sights mentioned, eleven are contrasted with those of the Greeks or other peoples (Lateiner 1989: 148). Egypt’s “inverse customs” to those of others are catalogued at 2.35, a preface to the “customs” section generally (Hdt. 2.35–98). This is the business of cultural translation, and, however inaccurate in describing the “other,” it is a narrative necessary to expand the horizons of the Greek readers. Devotion to the gods occupies 2.37–42. We are then offered strange variant tales of Heracles, Dionysus, and others, while Herodotus notes that some gods’ names are “native” to Greece, including Poseidon, the Dioscuri, Hera, Hestia, Themis, and the Graces and the Nereids (Hdt. 2.50). There follows a fascinating menagerie of Egyptian animals – crocodiles, hippopotami, the Phoenix bird, winged serpents, and many more (Hdt. 2.65–76). Secular customs like burial or practices like medicine round out this part, before moving to a history of the land (Hdt. 2.99–182), including their legendary kings, the chronology of Egyptian and Greek gods (Hdt. 2.142–6),

and the historical kings to Amasis (2.147–82). The historian approvingly notes how King Sesostris set up pillars when he defeated brave men and declared how he conquered them by his own power (*dunami*). The king gives a euphemistic and royal tone to his inscriptions by claiming he defeated the foe not by brute force or violence (*kratos* or *biē*), but by “his own ability/power” (Hdt. 2.102), evidencing the continued motif of the uses and abuses of power.

Book 3

This section resumes the *logos* (story) of Cambyses and his campaign in Egypt (mentioned last at 2.2, picked up at 3.1 and going to 3.38), organized to explain the origin of the event; then it presents the preparations of the Persians and the Egyptians, their arrival and battle, and the aftermath of Cambyses’ failure (Immerwahr 1966: 93–8). First, Cambyses, father of Cyrus II, campaigns against the Carthaginians (a fight never carried out), Ammonians, and Ethiopians (including Persian spies – a failure; Hdt. 3.17–26). In the aftermath of these campaigns comes the narratives of Cambyses’ wounding of the calf representing Apis/Epaphus and of his mad crimes against his relatives, Egyptians, and Persians (3.27–38). Around this same time, according to Herodotus, occurred the Spartan siege of Samos, where Polycrates was tyrant – perhaps a prelude to the motif of Greek campaigning initiatives to come (Immerwahr 1966: 98–9). The siege is also a chance to tell Samian stories such as that of Polycrates’ rise, his consolidation of power, and his eventually being lured away by money and murdered by Oroetes, as mentioned earlier (Hdt. 3.120–25). Polycrates took supreme power by killing one brother and banishing the second, Syloson (Hdt. 3.39). Even the despot’s name means “great might,” and he is said to have beaten (*kratēsās*) the Lesbians in a sea battle. The tale of Polycrates is clearly a “power narrative” of hybriistic ambition and greed, pointed up by Herodotus’ own comment that “Polycrates is the first of the Greeks we know to lay plans for the mastery of the sea [*thalassokrateein*] [except legendary sea lords like Minos] ... [he is also] the first of the human race to do so while having great hopes of mastering [*archein*] Ionia and the islands” (Hdt. 3.122; Grene, adapted). He was unsurpassed among Greek despots for his proud magnificence, says the historian (Hdt. 3.125).

The next great story concerns the revolt of the Magi after a crisis of Persian imperialism, and then Darius’ accession to power (Hdt. 3.61–87). The conspiracy of the seven noblemen leads to the assassination of the Magi (Hdt. 3.76–9), then to the rule of Darius (Hdt. 3.80–7). In this latter context comes the extraordinary debate on government in Persia, with three interlocutors: Otanes, Megabyzus, and Darius. For Otanes, monarchy (*mounarchiē*) is

unsuitable, in view of the outrages of Cambyses, for example. Monarchy “places even a good man in such a rulership [*archēn*] outside his usual thoughts; outrageousness [*hubris*] arises in him because of the goods he has, and envy [*phthonos*] from a position of rule [*archēthen*] is inbred in a human.”

The people acting as rulers [*plēthos archon*] maintain the finest name of all, equality under the law [*isonomie*], and secondly it does none of those things that the monarch does ... It [democracy] governs all its governing offices [*archas archei*] by lot, maintains governing [*archēn*] that is subject to review, and brings all proposals to public assembly.

(Hdt. 3.80.6, Grene)

Megabyzus then objects that the proposal to turn over power (*kratos*) to the many (*plēthos*) reflects a mistaken judgment. “Nothing is more unintelligent nor outrageous [*axunetōteron ... hubristoteron*] than the useless mob.” “Let us choose the society of best men and entrust the power [*kratos*] to them” (Hdt. 3.81, Grene). Finally, Darius (Hdt. 3.82) argues that, of the three governments in their best forms, oligarchy arouses private enmities and generates factions, but monarchy is the strongest (*kratiston*). Proof is that our freedom came from one man (Cyrus, who freed them from Median rule), and not from the people or from an oligarchy.

In the debate, *kratos*, not *dunamis*, is the common term for the locus of political power in the oligarchic and monarchic forms of government. Strength is what Megabyzus advocates giving to the oligarchs, and security from strength is what Darius advocates as the virtue of monarchy. The democratic system of Otanes favors a term with fewer connotations of might and force: *archē*, “governing” or “rule.” (See also Hdt. 6.43.3, where the historian gives further evidence that Otanes did argue for democratic governance in Persia: the Persian general Mardonius in Ionia disestablished the tyrannies and set up democracies in all the cities.)

In the event, the majority support Darius’ proposal for monarchy, and he is in fact chosen as king as a result of a portent, which is supposedly arbitrary but manipulated by his trickery (Hdt. 3.84–7): “Everything was full of the power of Darius” (Hdt. 3.88, Grene). The subsequent narrative is of the power and wealth of Darius (3.88–116) and, following five digression anecdotes (Hdt. 3.117–38), the story of his campaigns comprises the core of the account of the First Persian War (Hdt. 3.139–6.140). The exposition of Darius’ wealth, including his gold from India, occasions a famous digression on the exotic “otherness” of the Indian people on the Eastern edge of the Persian realm, which records Indian oddities of climate, flora and fauna, people and customs, but, curiously, no history (Hdt. 3.98–106). The Alexander historians and Arrian will continue this tradition in *Indica* writings.

Atossa, a wife of Darius, asks him why, with his great power (*dunamin*), he

has not annexed any nation or power to Persia (Hdt. 3.134); thus she is spurring on his plan. The campaigns begin, like those earlier of Croesus, almost accidentally, with a continuation of the story of Samos, last visited when it was under Polycrates (cf. Hdt. 3.39–60 with 3.120–5). Before Darius came to power, Syloson of Samos, “inspired by some divine fortune” (*theiē tuchē*), gave his cloak to Darius, who said: “You are the most generous of men; when I had no power [*dunamin*] at all, you gave me something even if it was a small thing; my gratitude is as great now as if I had received something immense” (Hdt. 3.140). In return, Syloson asks the grateful king to give him back his fatherland, Samos, to which the Great King agrees, initiating the conquest of that Greek island. Herodotus locates divine will at work alongside human ambition here once again.

The background to Samian rule up to this point sketches the attempt of Maeandrius, former deputy of Polycrates, to assume the despot’s rule (*dunamis*) upon his death. Maeandrius set up an altar to Zeus Eleutherios to gain popular favor, and said: “I wish to open up his [sc. Polycrates’] power [*archēn*] to all of you and I proclaim equality before the law for the commonality entire” (3.142, Grene). The people denounced him and he arrested those opposing him (Hdt. 3.142–3). So Syloson, with the will of the people and with Darius’ help, easily took power in Samos. This section is an object lesson in the ambitious search for power. Darius seeks power over Greek lands through deception, much as the despot Maeandrius sought the rule of Samos through false promises of civic equity. Even within the rule of law, power seekers can try to manipulate the people to gain power. It is to the credit of the Samians that they see through Maeandrius, but not that they accept Syloson so readily. Ironies abound with the antidespotic Maeandrius acting tyrannically, then trying to regain power by force, acting on the advice of a half-crazed brother and on motives for revenge; Otanes, supporter of “democracy,” restores monarchy on Samos (Hdt. 3.145–6; see Asheri et al. 2007 ad l.: 517). Simultaneously with the Samos campaign comes one of Babylon (Hdt. 3.150–60), in which Darius “became master of” (*ekratēse*) that city and pulled down its walls (Hdt. 3.159) in this second capture of it by Persia.

Book 4

A major focus here is the Scythian campaigns of Darius, which remind us of the earlier Scythian invasion of Asia (Hdt. 1.103–66) and state the usual reasons for an imperialist drive: the people to be invaded are wealthy and the aggressor seeks an empire and revenge. The narrative slides into a lengthy ethnographic excursus that recalls the one on Egypt but posits here a particularly inverse and bellicose “other.” Hartog (1988) treats the Scythian

“rhetoric of otherness”; and, although Herodotus’ characterization of the Scythians does show them as opposite to the Greeks and is confusing on many details of geography and culture (owing to his multiple sources), the historian avoids the savage and cruel stereotypes of some later writers (Asheri et al. 2007: 545–72). Interestingly, amid the many chapters dealing with the Scythians’ customs (Hdt. 3.46–82), the historian avoids discussing the structure of their rulership apart from mentioning the tribal division and earliest kings (Hdt. 4.6–7) and the “governor” of each Scythian district (*nomarchēs*, Hdt. 3.66.1), as if he were implying a kind of loose, simple regional tribal organization, at least in part nomadic. Whether the “Scythians” were an ethnic group or a political entity is a matter of much current debate (Asheri et al. 2007: 554). The Indo-Europeanist and structuralist Dumézil interestingly suggested that, of the three “castes” – priest, warrior, and farmer – the highest among the Scythians was the warrior (Dumézil 1978: 178–92). In such circumstances the Scythians may, for Herodotus, represent a people with a minimally clear hierarchy of rule (*archē*), but wielding considerable “physical power” (*kratos*) as warriors, whence their use as military auxiliaries by fifth-century Greeks.

The Scythian campaign of Darius starts with his march from Susa to the Ister River (present-day Danube; Hdt. 4.83–98), prefiguring the great march of Xerxes across the Hellespont and into Greece (Hdt. 7.26–130). An excursus on the geography of Scythia underlines the vastness of the territory and the ambition of the undertaking (Hdt. 4.99–101; see Immerwahr 1966: 108–9). The campaign proper (Hdt. 4.121–41) is an orderly narrative of Persians facing Eastern and Western Scythians. Darius’ bridge over the Ister prefigures Xerxes’ over the Hellespont, symbolizing the excessive ambition of the monarch. But the twist in the Scythian campaign is that the Ionians accompanying Darius are given charge of guarding the bridge until, as Darius is fleeing, the Ionians debate dismantling it (Hdt. 4.137). Miltiades of Athens, later the great general at Marathon, proposes thereby freeing Ionia, but Histiaeus of Miletus holds the opposite view, saying, in a politically charged discussion, that Darius’ rule allows each prince to “act as tyrant” (*turanneuei*) in his city. If Darius’ power (*dunamis*) were destroyed, each city would prefer to be ruled democratically (*dēmokrateesthai*) rather than by a tyrant (*turanneuesthai*). Histiaeus’ “pro-tyranny” view wins, all voting against Miltiades. This is an implicit denunciation of the Greeks’ lack of resolve at this point, but also a foreshadowing the Ionian Revolt. The Persians then escape across the bridge from the Scythians (Hdt. 4.140–41).

Book 5

Prior to the Ionian Revolt proper (Hdt. 5.28–6.42), there is an account of

Darius' generals in Europe, Megabazus and Otanes (Hdt. 4.143–4 and 5.1–27); the account includes the Hellespont and Thrace (5.1–10), the Paeonians, Pangaeum, and Macedonia (Hdt. 5.14–23), and the Hellespont and Lemnos (Hdt. 5.25–7). A digression on the Persians in Libya interrupts at 4.145–205, notably mixing the ethnography and history of Cyrene and describing the Persian ambitions for Africa.

The Ionian Revolt was dubbed “the beginning of evils” for the Greeks and the barbarians (Hdt. 5.97) since it involved the Athenians and Eretrians, especially in the burning of Sardis, and angered Darius, which led to the battle of Marathon and the invasion of Xerxes. After Otanes had subdued the Hellespont and “after there had been a short letup in the troubles, evils begin again; now it was from Naxos and Miletus that they befell the Ionians” (Hdt. 5.28, Grene). The Naxian democratic faction has taken refuge at Miletus, administered by the tyrant Aristagoras (Hdt. 5.30.3–4). The Naxians there ask the tyrant for “some power” (*dunamin tina*; here specifically “military forces”) to help them return to Naxos. Aristagoras says that he is not able to give them “such power” to bring them back to Naxos against the will of those holding the city. But the tyrant pledges to get, and in the end secures, military help from the Persians in the form of 200 ships to take Naxos, and in the end, he hopes, also the Cyclades. The revolt is a classic, extended narrative of how local disputes devolve into transnational ones, raw naval resources being the bargaining tool. Aristagoras and the Persians seek to intervene for their own personal gains of wealth, influence, and territory.

As preparations continue, the Milesian despot Histiaeus, earlier the advocate of Darius at the Ister bridge, is now held in Susa owing to Darius' suspicions. Histiaeus urges Aristagoras to revolt against Persia (5.36). Aristagoras takes counsel with those in his faction, among whom Hecataeus, the chronicler, was the greatest proponent for not waging war against the king, “mentioning as reasons all the nations that Darius ruled and his power [*dunamin*]” (Hdt. 5.36.2). When he did not convince them, Hecataeus argued for building a strong naval power by seizing the treasures of the shrine in Branchidae, since he “was aware that the power [*dunamin*] of Miletus was weak” and only by this treasure could they build a navy and “master the sea” (*epikratēsein tēs thalassēs*). Hecataeus here refers to potential military power, comparatively of Persia versus Miletus. It designates a potential to rule the sea by force (*epikrateō*), a power never actualized. Though Hecataeus' opinion is not followed, Herodotus gives significant attention to it as a sound strategy based on a rational assessment of the imbalances of power.

A digression on the political histories of Athens and Sparta occupies a substantial part of the Ionian Revolt narrative (Hdt. 5.39–96). The account of Sparta informs readers of the working and complexities of succession of the kings (Hdt. 5.39–48) and Spartan isolation from foreign expeditions (Hdt. 5.49–54). The story of Athens begins with Aristagoras' visit there to ask for

help and refocuses on the story of power manipulation in Athens under the tyrants, the murder of the tyrant's brother, Hipparchus, and the Spartan expedition at the advice of the Delphic Pythia, which ultimately frees Athens of tyrants (Hdt. 5.55–65). Athenian internal strife is characteristic of its political history, illustrated here by the struggle of the partisan Cleisthenes and Isagoras for *factional* power (*estiasian peri dunamios*) in Athens after the fall of the Pisistratids, when Cleisthenes “made the people his companions” (*ton dēmon prosetairizetai*, Hdt. 5.66; Rhodes 2004: 280–3). There follows the narrative of Cleisthenic reforms and of the Spartan Cleomenes' unsuccessful attempts to oust him (Hdt. 5.66–76). The power of Athens through democracy is extolled: “So Athens [after the tyrants] had increased in greatness ... when freed they sought to win, because each was trying to achieve for his very self” (Hdt. 5.78, Grene). The next sections describe how Athens resists the hostilities of Aegina and then of Sparta, so that its position is strengthened (Hdt. 5.79–96). Amid Sparta's failed attempt to reestablish tyranny in Athens comes a discussion weighing the best form of government for Athens, in the view of outsiders.

The Spartans sought to reestablish Hippias in Athens, for fear that the people of Attica (*genos to Attikon*), “in its freedom,” that is, without control of a tyranny (*turannidos*), would become the equal of Sparta (*isorrhopon*), but if it had a weak ruler it would be ready to be ruled (*peitharcheesthai hetoimon*) (Hdt. 5.91). The Corinthian Socles opposes the Spartan attempt to “abolish the rule of equality [*isokratia*] in the cities” and put tyrannies in their place (5.92). When specific forms of government within Greece are discussed, the vocabulary used is not of general power terms, but of types of organization within the *polis*. Both Sparta and Corinth here debate the best form of self-governance for Athens in view of the self-interest of each. Note that Socles introduces the stronger ethical terms of *isokratia* (egalitarian rule), which Sparta does not and for which the historian shows sympathy.

The next crucial episode comes with Aristagoras of Miletus' speech before the Athenian assembly, which succeeds in getting Athens to promise to send twenty ships to help the Ionians, leading to the phrase noted above: “These were the ships that were the beginning of evils for both Greeks and barbarians” (Hdt. 5.97, Grene). This turning point sets in motion a causal chain leading to Xerxes' invasion, and it is based on a speech that falsifies the degree of risk: “It seems that it is less troublesome to fool many men than one,” Aristagoras continues (Hdt. 5.97), meaning the 30,000 in Athens' assembly versus Cleomenes of Sparta, who had turned down the request there. The power of persuasion, the gullibility of a democratic body, and the almost fated progress of events are the key points made here.

The Ionian Revolt is narrated at the end of Book 5 and early on in Book 6 (Hdt. 5.99–103 and 5.116–6.32), first describing the uprisings, then the Persian suppression of them, with the account of the Cypriote campaign in between (Hdt. 5.104–16.1). The Athenian fleet lands at Ephesus and then invades, captures, and burns Sardis, including its temple of Cybele (5.101–2). The latter act, Herodotus notes, gave the Persians the reason to burn the Greek temples in return (including those in Athens). The revolt then spreads to other towns of Cyprus, the Carians, and the Greeks in the Hellespont and Bosphorus. Darius prayed to Zeus to give him the chance to punish the Athenians and dramatically had a servant tell him at each turn: “Master, remember the Athenians” (Hdt. 5.105). The deceitful Histiaeus of Miletus, pressed by Darius, commands an army for him (Hdt. 5.106–8), then he escapes the Persians only to be rejected by his countrymen (Hdt. 6.1–6). Histiaeus’ lively story ends with his recapture by the Persians and his beheading (Hdt. 6.26–30). This gruesome end for the author of the Ionian Revolt is ironically punctuated by Darius’ ultimate respect for the man (Hdt. 6.30). Miletus is eventually taken, after the Persians, aided by a Phoenician fleet, take the island of Lade and cut off the Milesians by sea and land (Hdt. 6.6–25). The end of the revolt describes how the king took all the cities on the islands and on the mainland, captured the peoples, castrated the best-looking boys, had the girls sent to himself, and burned the cities. The epilogue points up the despotic oppression: “So for the third time the Ionians were enslaved, once by the Lydians, and twice, in order, by the Persians” (Hdt. 6.32).

As the Phoenicians were threatening to take Caria, Miltiades, the Athenian acting as governor of the cities of the Chersonese agreed to help a Thracian tribe, the Dolonci, in their resistance to the invasion. Miltiades was motivated by dissatisfaction with the rule of Pisistratus (*archē*) and wishing to be away (from Athens). “At that time, the supreme power [lit. “all the power,” *to pan kratos*] in Athens was held by Pisistratus; but there was also a man of great influence [*edunasteue*], one Miltiades, son of Cypselos,” whose influence came specifically from his Olympic chariot victory and from his noble lineage (Hdt. 6.35). Thus the Athenian sought to form his own power base by success in an independent, local military expedition. He also looms larger in the greater story of Greek resistance to the Scythians and to the Persians at Marathon and can be seen as an antidespotic despotic crusader. The phrase “total power” occurs three times in Herodotus (here and at 7.3 and 7.96). In all cases holding *to pan kratos* is not a compliment but an unflattering description of a tyrant figure wielding oppressive power: Pisistratus, Darius’ domineering wife, and the Persians who make virtual slaves of the Ionian leaders of forces made to fight for Xerxes. Miltiades for the time being took refuge in Athens when the Persian fleet approached (Hdt. 6.41).

Mardonius’ campaign against Athens and Eretria is aborted when his fleet is wrecked by a storm at Mount Athos and the Persians are attacked by Thracian

Brygoi (Hdt. 6.42–5). Like the Scythian expedition in Book 4, this is seen as a failure by Herodotus. Then Thasos is subjugated when a messenger of Darius orders them to disarm and they comply (Hdt. 6.48–46). There follows a lengthy narrative (Hdt. 6.49–93) regarding the island of Aegina, which agrees to the king's request for submission (he asks them for "earth and water"); this prompts a reaction from Sparta against the island, then the deposition of the Spartan king Demaratus, who obstructs efforts against Aegina, Demaratus' departure to Persia, the madness and death of the Spartan King Cleomenes, and the continuation of the war with Aegina by Athens. The story not only shows the Persian undermining of Greek unity, it illustrates power tensions within Sparta and explains how Demaratus came to be an advisor to both Darius and Xerxes during their invasions. Just as importantly, it contains a digression on Spartan kingship (Hdt. 6.50–60), how Sparta's own legends of its origins are unreliable, and the special honors paid to the king. In this latter section there are comparisons of specific Spartan customs with those of non-Greeks, notably how their kingship resembles that of the Persians in one custom and how Spartan inheritance customs resemble those of Egypt (Hdt. 6.59–60). Herodotus presents a partial "othering" of Sparta as an exceptional *polis* with some practices of hierarchical power closer to non-Greeks.

The Aegina story leads to the narrative of the great battle of Marathon (6.94–120). The Marathon confrontation in 490 BC prefigures the war proper in 480 BC and was a direct result of Athens' involvement in the Ionian Revolt. Darius' defeat at Marathon prompts Xerxes' invasion of Greece. Acts of mutual aggression are the causes of war. Prior to Marathon, the Persians attack some sanctuaries (Naxos, Eretria), but revere others (Delos). There is a virtual "proem" introducing the Marathon story (Hdt. 6.94) and reciting Darius' motives for the expedition, foremost his daily mantra to "remember the Athenians" after their siege of Sardis (Hdt. 5.105), while also using as a "pretext" for the invasion the Pisistratids' encouragement against their fellow Athenians. Retribution is therefore underscored as the impetus for the invasion. The Persian generals move across the Aegean, while an earthquake at Delos serves as a portent for the evil to come (Hdt. 6.98). The ominous shaking of Delos is later echoed by Thucydides, both in his record of an earthquake there (also at the start of the Peloponnesian War) ("Delos was moved," *ekinēthē*, Th. 2.8.3, the same word Herodotus uses) and in his proem to that work, when he describes the war itself as "the greatest movement" (*kinēsis*, Th. 1.1.2). Human conflict is foreshadowed by a quasi-divine, chaotic upheaval of nature. Finally, near the mainland, the Persians enslave the people of Eretria on Euboeia (Hdt. 6.100–1) and make for Marathon.

The Athenians go to Marathon under ten generals, of whom Miltiades is the foremost (Hdt. 6.103–4) and is eventually portrayed as the greatest hero of the battle. A messenger, Philippides, is sent to Sparta to ask for help, arrives there after a two-day run of about 150 miles, having met Pan along the way, and

then quickly runs back to Marathon to report that Sparta will not come until after the full moon (presumably in view of its festival of Karneia; Hdt. 6.105). For Herodotus, Philippides' run is remarkable not as an extraordinary physical feat for a military messenger, but as an event to mark the Spartans' crucial failure and the divine apparition that prompts Athens to build a shrine to Pan as a divine ally. Miltiades' cogent appeal to the man casting the tie-breaking vote to go to battle lays out the high stakes, the great risk, and the need for courageous action (Hdt. 6.109). Throughout this narrative, there is a tension between the threat to Greece as a whole unity (e.g. Philippides to the Spartans, Hdt. 6.106.2), and the speech of Miltiades before battle, saying that victory will make Athens the greatest city (Hdt. 6.109).

The god Pan caused fear in the foe during the battle proper, when the Persians take fright at seeing the Athenians in armor coming at a run at them across eight stades, as they attributed to them "madness and [a desire for] utter self-destruction" (Hdt. 6.112). The Athenians eventually beat the Persians and made them flee (Hdt. 6.113), being "the first Greeks we know of to charge the enemy at a run and first to face the sight of the Median dress" (Hdt. 6.112). When the Persians sail off quickly to reach Athens before the Athenians, the latter "rush with all speed to defend their city" (Hdt. 6.116). The Athenians succeed and the Persians sail back home. The historian's account of Marathon is a virtual paean to the Athenians, in tune with the Athenians' own long celebration of the achievement in the fifth century (the event decorated the Painted Stoa in the city center). The run of Philippides and of the Athenian soldiers themselves throws their quickness and enterprise into contrast with the hesitation of the Spartans.

Herodotus vehemently denies the slanderous tale that the Athenian Alcmeonid family had betrayed the Greeks to the Persians (Hdt. 6.115, 123–4), but this leads to a digression on the family whose most famous later son is Pericles (6.125–31). We then turn sharply back to the story of Miltiades' sad end, fined as he was for deceiving the Athenians about his attack on Paros for personal motives. The mention of Pericles' fortuitous origins right in the middle of Miltiades' unhappy narrative may itself suggest a subtle warning to count no man happy until his end, and may recall to the readers during the Peloponnesian War the story of another great general who came to a sad end.

Book 7

The focus remains on the personal, human motivations that give rise to power and incite revenge. When he learns of Marathon, Darius is "even more set on making war on the Athenians, as well as the Egyptians who had revolted" (Hdt. 7.1). Xerxes claims to be a proper heir to Darius, on advice from the Spartan Demaratus to say that he was born when Darius had rule (*kratos*) over

the Persians (Hdt. 7.3). Darius agrees and names Xerxes heir, which would have happened even without the advice, since Atossa, Darius' wife, "had total power" (*eiche to pan kratos*). Thus the issue of the transition of Persian power is settled with aid from a disaffected Spartan and with influence from Darius' wife. The locus of power has nothing to do with justice or principles, but with human weaknesses and self-interest. The passage illustrates the ambition of a ruler's wife for her son, the scheming and rhetorical ploys of one seeking to be heir, and an outsider's treacherous help.

Xerxes is described as at first reluctant to take on Darius' full agenda of conquest, and it takes the persuasion of his cousin Mardonius, himself with ambitions to be viceroy of Greece, to convince the king to undertake an expedition of explicit vengeance against Athens (Hdt. 7.5). Another influential, and again self-serving, promoter of the expedition was the "oracle-monger" Onomacritus, in service of the disaffected Pisistratid faction, who used oracles selectively, to guide Xerxes to invade by bridging the Hellespont (Hdt. 7.6). Thereupon Xerxes addresses his council to justify the expedition:

Men of Persia, it is no new law [*nomos*] that I initiate among you; it has come to me from the tradition ... It is the god who leads us on, and so, when we of ourselves set about our many enterprises, we prosper ... When I assumed the throne, I considered how I might not fall short of those before me in this place of honor and how I might win no less power [*dunamin*] for Persia than they did.

(Hdt. 7.8, Grene, adapted)

He then pledges to bridge the Hellespont and punish the Athenians for what they have done to the Persians and his father, saying: "if we subdue them and their neighbors who live in the land of Pelops, the Phrygian, we shall show to all a Persian land to border on the upper heaven of Zeus" (Hdt. 7.8, Grene, adapted).

Xerxes here acts on a metaphysical "law" that expansionism is not only desirable but necessary to prove his worth as a ruler. Herodotus gives him the explicit rhetoric of the hybriistic despot, who challenges even the gods for his own honor by seeking to rule the world. As J. A. S. Evans observes: "For Thucydides, imperialism was part of human nature ... For Herodotus, expansionism was a *nomos*" and, for Herodotus, "the *nomoi* of a nation were the outgrowth of its *physis* [nature]" (1991: 23–4). Thucydides (5.105.2) also portrays the Athenians as understanding *nomos* as conventional practice based on one's *phusis*: "The drive to dominate others is here described as a necessary outgrowth of a universal order sanctioned by nature" (Ostwald 1988: 42).

Xerxes' general, Mardonius, agrees with Xerxes: It would be a terrible thing if, for no injury done to Persia but wishing simply to increase our power [*dunamin*], we should have subdued and taken for slaves ... many

other great nations, and then not punish the Greeks, who, on their side, began the wrongdoing. What should we fear? ... What common power [*dunamin*] of their wealth? We know these peoples' form of battle, and we know that their power [*dunamin*] is weak.

(Hdt. 7.9, Grene, adapted)

The reference to the “power” of wealth evidences a rare sense of the term *dunamis* in Herodotus (it occurs only here and at 1.192, in relation to Babylon). Mardonius here commits an error typical of the Persians in the historian's view, namely the confusion of quantity with quality or virtue as the true basis of strength. David Konstan (1987) observes, especially in Books 7 and 8, how Xerxes highly values the concrete and the material, the visible marks of power, in contrast to Greek acting according to ideals of virtue; the Persians are described as unified and the Greeks in internal discord but sharing a common culture and values. Later Xerxes cannot understand the Greek custom of competing at the Olympics for a mere olive crown instead of money: “What sort of men have you led us to fight against,” he asks Tigranes, “who contend, not for money, but for the sake of excelling [*aretēs*]?” (Hdt. 8.26, Grene). Again in Book 7, we see the spectacle of Xerxes crossing the Hellespont, recording his obsession with empirical measurements, watching his troops, counting his men, all 1,700,000 of them, and riding before all his men and sailing by all his ships. Before the battle at Thermopylae, Demaratus resists telling Xerxes the number of his foes, but rather explains that the Greeks in their poverty acquire virtue on the basis of wisdom and tradition (Hdt. 7.102.1). When Xerxes boasts of the numerical imbalance in his favor and the lack of fear or unity in the Greek forces, Demaratus explains with the famous reply that they are strong, since

They have as the despot over them the Law [*Nomos*], and they fear him much more than your men fear you ... he bids them always to do the same thing: not to flee from the fight before any multitude of men whatever but to stand firm in the ranks and either conquer or die.

(Hdt. 7.104, Grene)

Herodotus thus portrays the “barbarian” foundations of power and strength as essentially different from the Greek, highlighting in the end Greek *aretē*, or excellence, and guidance by “law” over wealth, numbers, and despotic rule.

Xerxes' uncle, Artabanus, emerges as the sole “tragic warner,” observing that the gods thwart those who are the greatest. If the god has ill will or jealousy against the large Persian army, he may cause it to perish (Hdt. 7.10; see 7.16; Lattimore 1939). Artabanus later identifies the plan to invade Greece as *hubris* (Hdt. 7.16). Here we recall Xerxes' boast that the Persian empire will reach to Zeus' heavens. Xerxes first responds in anger and resolves to go forward, then in private reconsiders the wisdom of the plan, only in the end to be convinced to proceed at the urging of a persistent vision sent by the gods (Hdt. 7.11–19).

The vision appears to be an agent of divine retribution, leading the king to failure as repayment for his *hubris*, which even Artabanus recognizes as an inevitable fate. Men of despotic authority bent on more power, Herodotus seems to suggest, are blinded to divine signs even when their rational self sees the folly of a plan. Herodotus also evidences here no small reliance on the classic pattern of epic and drama, in which powerful figures are led by *hubris* to commit folly and suffer retribution, the gods transparently seeing fate to its conclusion.

Xerxes presses on, and Herodotus describes his motives for digging the canal at Athos for his fleet to cut navigational corners, further evidence of insolence: “As far as my guess goes, it was out of mere arrogance [*megalophrosunēs*] that Xerxes made them dig the channel, because he wanted to show his power [*dunamin*] and leave a memorial behind him” (Hdt. 7.24, Grene).

The term for “arrogance” clearly alludes to an antidivine *hubris* that perversely transforms land into a seaway. “To show his power” here is to enact his might with a physical marvel of the achievement. The abuse of power to confound land and sea is paralleled in the next episode, the building of a bridge for the land army to cross the Hellespont (Hdt. 7.35–7). This is a locus classicus for the tyrannical display of insolence, a human attempt literally to “tame” nature, to extend the despot’s domination to the divine realm. After a storm wrecks the first bridges,

Xerxes was furious and bade his men lay three hundred lashes on the Hellespont and lower into the sea a yoke of fetters ... He told those who laid on the lashes to say these words, of violent arrogance, worthy of a barbarian: “You bitter water, our master lays this punishment upon you because you have wronged him.”

(Hdt. 7.35, Grene)

A scene fit for epic follows, suggesting that the *Histories* have here commenced their narrative of the climactic clash of Greeks and Persians. At the Asian side of the crossing, Xerxes observes from a platform the entire army and sheds a tear in a “meditation of the shortness of the life of a man” (Hdt. 7.46, Grene). Artabanus sees this and himself opines that “no man is so happy ... that it shall not be his lot ... to wish himself dead rather than live ... death comes to be for a man a most desirable escape from a life of wretchedness” (Hdt. 7.46, Grene). Again we are in the realm of epic musings on the life of man (cf. Hom. *Il.* 6.147–50: “like the generations of leaves are those of men”). But the grim pessimism of Xerxes and friend contrasts pointedly with the exposition of Herodotus’ Solon on how real happiness is found in moderation, a view as alien to Croesus as to Xerxes. The passage serves as a weighty pause before the ultimate conflict of the *Histories*, suggesting that the prior stories, crucial in themselves, are somehow a proem

to the main struggle to come.

The reflection on human nature leads directly to one on empire and power. Artabanus warns Xerxes that the land and sea are his two greatest enemies. On the sea, no harbor is large enough for his navy, and on the land there is a temptation to desire an “empire without boundary,” one land after another, ultimately breeding famine and failure (Hdt. 6.49). In an implicit comparison of imperial Athens with Persia, Thucydides later alludes to this axiom when his Pericles tells the Athenians that, of the world’s “two parts, land and sea,” they are masters of the sea and “with your naval force today there is no one – not the King of Persia nor any existing race – who can stop you from sailing” (Th. 2.62.2, Warner; Scanlon 1994: 170–1). Athens seems to be an even more hybriatic “new Persia,” which later overstepped its naval ambitions, as Thucydides knew (Fornara 1971: 86–91; Raaflaub 1985: 221–48). Artabanus seems, in contrast, to be a more cautious strategist of imperial expansion, though his advice is again rejected by Xerxes. Xerxes replies, in essence, that to have gain one must take risks:

You see how far the Persian power has advanced [lit. “to what point of *dunamis* Persian affairs have advanced”] ... [if my predecessors had taken advice like yours], you never would have seen our power [lit. “affairs”] advance so far. No, it was by risking dangers that they brought that power to where it is. Big things are won by big dangers.

(Hdt. 7.50, Grene)

Xerxes’ theory has no nuance to assess degrees of risks and uses ancestral accomplishments to justify his project.

Xerxes tell his leaders that, if they conquer (*kratēsōmen*) the Greeks, no other army in the world will withstand the Persians. Then he performs a ritual before the sea, which may be a gesture of repent for lashing the Hellespont (Hdt. 7.53–4). The army takes seven days and nights to cross to Europe and a local man comments on the feat, ominously invoking *hubris* by equating Xerxes to Zeus (Hdt. 7.56). Xerxes’ arrogant image clings to him in spite of ritual attempts to disguise it.

After the king marshals forces on the plain to the “ordering and numbering of his army,” there comes the epic-like catalog of Persian forces, the land army (Hdt. 7.59–88), and the navy (Hdt. 7.89–99), concluding with special admiration for Artemisia, female admiral of the forces from Herodotus’ Halicarnassus and “of all allies the leader who gave the King the best counsels” (Hdt. 7.99, Grene). The leaders of the Ionians among the Persian army “did not serve as generals, but were as much slaves as the soldiers were,” since the Persian generals were the ones who had “the supreme power” (*to pan kratos*) and were “the rulers of [*archontes*] the other peoples” (Hdt. 7.96, Grene adapted). The catalog reflects Xerxes’ view: the Ionians and others are servile, and ironically one woman stands out as wise and strong.

It is at this juncture, as noted before, that Demaratus warns Xerxes of the Greek, especially Dorian, virtues and the Spartans' determination to fight against the numerical odds: they have courage from wisdom and the strength of their laws, by virtue of which they fight off poverty and despotism. The Spartans themselves will never accept slavery for Greece, and they will challenge Xerxes to battle (Hdt. 7.102). When Xerxes resisted this characterization of the Spartans, Demaratus made the remark cited above, that the Spartans are not entirely free but "have as the despot over them the Law," which bids them "to stand firm in the ranks and either conquer (*epikrateein*) or die" (Hdt. 7.104, Grene). Of course the king ignores the tragic warning and underestimates the power of law to induce communal cooperation.

The actual march into Greece is an occasion to show how Xerxes and his army proceeded across Thrace and down into Central Greece, draining the resources of the reluctant but accommodating cities along the way (Hdt. 7.105–21), while his navy went through the canal at Athos and to the Thermaic Gulf, paralleling the land route (Hdt. 7.122–4). When Persian heralds demanded from the Greek cities oaths of loyalty to the king, most of the Thessalian, Boeotian, and other peoples complied (Hdt. 7.128). But the king refused this option to Athens and Sparta, to punish them for the mistreatment of heralds sent earlier by King Darius (Hdt. 7.133). Herodotus makes an exceptional comment on the importance of the Athenians' resistance to the Persians before they got to the Peloponnese, calling them the "saviors of Greece," and a remarkable counterfactual speculation that, had they not resisted, the Persians would have eventually conquered Sparta and taken the whole of Greece (Hdt. 7.139). This honest appraisal does not make Herodotus an uncritical pro-Athenian commentator, as his criticisms of the Athenians' internal politics elsewhere make clear, but it pinpoints their crucial and courageous leadership that resulted in withstanding the invasion.

The narrative then catches up with the complex preparations and negotiations among the Greeks set to resist the king, events that occurred between Xerxes' departure from Susa and his arrival in Central Greece (Hdt. 7.140–78). The Delphic oracle advises to give to Athena a "wall of wood" which will "serve yourselves and your children in the days that shall be" (Hdt. 7.141). A controversy follows about whether the advice was to take refuge on the Acropolis, once wood-enclosed, or in ships, with the city abandoned. The latter view prevails, promoted by Themistocles, the great tactician who appears first here in the *Histories* (Hdt. 7.143–4). The First Council of the Pan-Hellenic League meets at the Isthmus and sends embassies to Argos, Sicily, and Crete to request alliances. In Syracuse, Greek messengers appeal to the tyrant Gelon in view of his authority: "You have gained greatly in power [*dunamios*], and a great portion of Greece is yours, as you are master of Sicily; so help us now, who are the saviors of Greece for freedom; indeed join in that freeing of Greece" (Hdt. 7.157, Grene). But Gelon, who had been

slighted by the Greeks not aiding him earlier, agrees to send forces only if he can command the whole army or navy. The Athenian messenger accuses Gelon of yearning too much for power (“so greedy are you for that military command”) and justifies Athenian naval command by appeals to tradition (Hdt. 7.161). Among the Greeks, absolute military might alone does not determine leadership, but the traditional status and independence of Greek states play crucial roles in Books 7–9.

The Corcyreans, when approached by the embassy, hedge their bets. They promise to the Greeks to send help but deliberately detain their ships in the Southern Peloponnese. They expected the Persians would win a great victory and rule all of Greece (*katakratēsanta pollon arxein pasēs tēs Hellados*). They were prepared to capitulate to the Persians, even pointing out that their military power (*dunamin*) was not negligible, and tried to fool the Greeks with their failure to send ships (Hdt. 7.168). Political pragmatism that assesses the balance of power, not the principle of freedom for Greeks, motivates Corcyra in this event, but the other Greeks see through the ploy. Next the Thessalians refuse to join other Greeks since the Greeks refuse to defend Thessalian territory against the Persian invasion, succinctly saying: “there is no compulsion you can apply to us; for there is no compulsion that is stronger than sheer want of power [*adunamiēs ananke*]” (Hdt. 7.172, Grene). This is an ironic inversion of the principle of compulsion of the stronger, and again an expression of political pragmatism over ideals.

The Greeks at the Isthmus finally decide to take a stand on land at Thermopylae and on sea at Artemisium. The Persians sail and march southward to those points (Hdt. 7.179–200). When counting up a Persian force of over five million people including support personnel, Herodotus concludes that, among all the men in the army, “for handsomeness and size there was none worthier [*axionikōteros*]” than Xerxes “to hold that power [*to kratos*] [of supreme command]” (Hdt. 7.187, Grene). *Kratos* here is “military command,” merited by appearance, he says, possibly in an ironic comment, without mention of tactical skills.

The Persian fleet is followed to the sea above Euboea, where a storm reduces the force by more than four hundred ships, perhaps helped by Greek prayers to Poseidon (Hdt. 7.188–92). Xerxes’ army encamped near Trachis, perhaps ominously the site of Heracles’ gruesome death, and the Greeks at the “hot gates,” Thermopylae, both setting the scene for the first great battle with Xerxes (Hdt. 7.197–201). The location is further noted as the present extent of each side’s control: Xerxes was “master of [*epekratee*] all the country to the north” of this point, while the Greeks were in control of the parts to the west and south (Hdt. 7.201, Grene). Obviously conflicts very often take place at the border between two domains of *kratos*; Herodotus marks the impasse in summary form just prior to the great clash. Ephialtes, a local Greek, revealed to Xerxes a little-known mountain path as a back route to Thermopylae,

which allowed the Persians to overcome the Greeks (Hdt. 7.213).

Thermopylae (Hdt. 7.201–39) is the place of one of the five great battles during the war with Xerxes, along with (in order of narration) those at Artemisium, Salamis, Plataea, and Mycale. The centrality of Salamis between pairs of land and sea battles is given also a thematic importance by the historian; it is decisive and characteristic of Greek cleverness. Thermopylae displays the outstanding valor of the Spartans, while Artemisium exhibits Athenian failure. Leonidas, the Spartan king and hero, is the key figure at Thermopylae, in his epic-like genealogy, his valiant decision to make a stand (spurred on by an oracle), his death, and the epic strife for his corpse. The self-sacrificing Leonidas contrasts with the treacherous figures of Ephialtes and Demaratus. The conversations of Demaratus with Xerxes frame the battle and underscore the Spartans as “the fairest kingship and the fairest city among the Greeks, aye, and the bravest men” (Hdt. 7.209, Grene and 7.235–37; Immerwahr 1966: 260–3). The Persians’ dismay at Greek culture is epitomized by their amazement at the exercise and grooming of the Spartans before battle (Hdt. 7.208–9). The strategic outcome of Thermopylae is less important in the story than its function as a model of Greek military and moral virtue.

Book 8

The ultimate Greek withdrawal at Artemisium was neither a victory nor a defeat, as the Greeks sought to live to fight another day. Though Artemisium compares with Thermopylae as a battle to control a narrow passage (see Hdt. 8.15), it more sharply contrasts with it in its good fortune of the storms, taken as divine favor that assists the Athenians and others in resisting a much larger force. Yet after three engagements the Greeks strategically withdraw. The battle of Artemisium (Hdt. 8.1–25) in other ways foreshadows issues of Salamis, with the introduction of a flexible and patriotic Themistocles and with internal, arguably productive, dissent among the Greeks. This also contrasts with the *modus operandi* of the Persians. Herodotus makes the explicit point that the suppression of internal quarrels, for example over fleet command (*megiston kratos*, Hdt. 8.2), allowed a unity that dissolved after the Persian Wars (Hdt. 8.3). The subsequent march of the Persians south to the oracle of Delphi results in their fleeing in fear of divine portents and demonstrates divine displeasure at the invasion (Hdt. 8.37–9).

The naval battle at Salamis is in many ways the martial climax of the *Histories*, the true turning point of the action. It is built up by the indecisive conflict at Artemisium, and by Thermopylae, a glorious but also indecisive event. Salamis results in the departure of Xerxes himself, and sets up the final defeats of the remnant Persians at Plataea and Mycale in Book 9. The Salamis

episode occupies the biggest single battle narrative in the *Histories*, from 8.40 to 8.125, including the antecedents (Hdt. 8.40–82), the battle proper (Hdt. 8.83–96), and the aftermath (Hdt. 8.97–125) (Immerwahr 1966: 267–87). A virtual catalog of Greek ships gives the account a Homeric flavor (Hdt. 8.42–8). The antecedent chapters are noteworthy for their exposition of the internal tensions indicative of the different methods of Greek and Persian dialogue. Among the Greeks, the Peloponnesians want to withdraw to the Isthmus and build a wall, the Athenians to make a stand at sea after their city has been abandoned (Hdt. 8.49, 70–4). Among the Persians, the solitary wise advice (of Artemisia) is not taken against the majority of generals (Hdt. 8.68–9). On the Greek side, prominence is given to the strategy of Themistocles regarding how essential it was to make a united stand at Salamis versus disunity and defeat in the Peloponnese (Hdt. 8.57–64). Themistocles, a wily trickster hero in the mold of Odysseus, outflanks his fellow Greeks and forces the stand at Salamis by means of a duplicitous message to prompt Xerxes to attack before the Greeks disperse (Hdt. 8.75). There is deliberate irony in Herodotus' account that shows the Persians following a majority view and the Greeks manipulated by one man, but behind this is the display of the greater flexibility and acuity of Greek strategy, whereby the sharpest leader can save the situation. The rifts among the Greeks, especially the Athenians versus the others, foreshadow the greater split leading to the Peloponnesian War of the historian's own day.

The battle seems to take on its own topsy-turvy life apart from any commanders in chief. Xerxes sits on a "throne" from a mainland mountain facing the island and observes noteworthy actions of the generals (Hdt. 8.90); his men "fought with zest and in fear of Xerxes" as the king was watching them (Hdt. 8.86, Grene). Among the Persians, Artemisia is the most praised commander when she rams a friendly ship, in error or to evade the Athenians, and prompts Xerxes, assuming that a Greek is hit, to exclaim: "My men have become women, and my women men" (Hdt. 8.87–8). The king's misplaced commendation reflects on his poor perception and judgment. When the Greeks hesitate at first to engage, the phantom of a woman shouts loudly to all the Greeks: "You crazy Greeks, how long will you continue backing water?" (Hdt. 8.84, Grene). A phantom ship from the gods prevents the Corinthian commander from deserting during the battle (Hdt. 8.94). The inversion of normal prowess among men and women marks the event as a felicitous paradox whose successful outcome may have relied on divine favor. The Persians are compelled by a despot, but the Greeks, though as usual rivaling one other, freely display fierce courage. Almost as if in an athletic contest, praise is meted out by the collective, first to the Aeginetans, and second to the Athenians (Hdt. 8.93). Themistocles plays no major part in the battle proper and, though each leader votes for himself as best for the prize of valor, the Athenian is valued as second best by all commanders and his unobtrusive genius is acknowledged (Hdt. 8.123–4).

The Salamis conflict is followed by Persian and Greek councils and the return of Xerxes to Asia. Xerxes first prizes the advice of Artemisia, which is exactly suited to please him, namely to return home and leave Mardonius in charge of land forces to fight on; he can thereby claim victory at a distance or dissociate himself from defeat (Hdt. 8.102–3). Both are shameful options in Greek terms. Themistocles' good advice to cut the bridge at the Hellespont is rejected, and he delays an Athenian attack on the king, secretly to preserve his own favor with Persia (Hdt. 8.109–11). Conflicting accounts of the inglorious return of Xerxes across the Hellespont give closure to the outbound narrative (Hdt. 8.117–20).

The end of Book 8 and beginning of Book 9 narrate mostly events involving Mardonius' forces and the Greek army leading up to the battle at Plataea (Hdt. 8.126–44 and 9.1–18; Immerwahr 1966: 140–3). On the theme of power alliances, we find the lengthy episode in which Mardonius has sent King Alexander I of Macedon as an intermediary to Athens. The aim was to try to forge an alliance with the Athenians and thereby overpower Greece by naval force (Hdt. 8.136). Alexander then arrives in Athens, warns the Athenians of the power (*dunamis*) of the king, and urges Athens not to oppose him but come to terms (Hdt. 8.140). The Spartan envoys beg Athens not to yield. The Athenians reply to Alexander, “We know of ourselves that the power of the Mede is many times greater than our own ... yet we have such a hunger for freedom that we will fight as long as we are able” (Hdt. 8.143). The Athenians then turn to the Spartans and forcefully assert their devotion to keeping Greece free, citing famously the common blood, language, shrines, and habits engendered in common (Hdt. 8.144). It is a salutary pledge in the Greekness that transcends politics and past wars, a unity, however temporary in the *Histories*, that reminds readers of the principles by which Greeks could cooperate at the acme of their union. Here Herodotus comes as close to enunciating ideals for Greece as Thucydides comes to recapitulating Athenian ideals in Pericles' funeral oration.

Book 9

The opening chapters (Hdt. 9.1–24) not only lead up to the narrative of Plataea (Hdt. 9.25–89), they “reset” the people and the moods among the two sides. The renewed Athenian confidence and indignation against the Persians is signified by their stoning of a solitary Athenian man, Lycidas, and of his wife and children, when he supports Mardonius' offer of alliance with Athens (Hdt. 9.4–5). Sparta comes to assist Athens, while Mardonius demolishes Athens and leaves for Boeotia, where his cavalry has an advantage. An anecdote describes a Boeotian who dines with a Persian and reveals that, “within a very short time indeed, you will see but few survivors” of the many

feasting Persians. The Persian dares not tell the prediction to Mardonius, saying: “what comes from God, no man can turn back ... we follow in the bondage of necessity” (Hdt. 9.16). This is a sad lamentation of humanity, fatal inevitability, and fear of the reaction of the despot, resonant themes of the work (see, e.g., Hdt. 7.46 on mortality). Mardonius clearly has the “supreme power of command” (*kratos*) and the erroneous strategy is his doing (Hdt. 9.42). When in the first skirmishes a magnificent Persian cavalry commander, Masistius, is killed, the Greeks struggle for and recover his body but do not mutilate it, as the Persians did with Leonidas. As the Spartan king Pausanias says: “Such actions are more fit for barbarians than Greeks; and even in them we find it a matter of offense” (Hdt. 9.22–5, 79).

Plataea and Mycale are in some ways paralleled to Thermopylae and Artemisium, in that both supposedly happened on the same day, and the sea battles prefigure Athenian naval might in later years (Immerwahr 1966: 287–90). At Plataea, a bitter dispute erupts between the Athenians and the Tegean allies over who should man the left wing in battle, a dispute echoing the divisive squabbling elsewhere in the war (Hdt. 9.26–7). The divine role is highlighted in the account of Plataea. The Elean seer Tisamenus aids the Spartans in reading the omens that predict victory, but the Persian seer Hegesistratus, also from Elis, finds the omens unfavorable for his patrons (Hdt. 9.33–6 and 37–8). Mardonius’ supreme *hubris* was to cross the local Asopus River, which the oracles specifically forbade (Hdt. 9.36, 40, 59). The Spartan king Pausanias prays to Hera and the Spartans offer sacrifice near her Plataean temple, after which the tide of battle seems to turn (Hdt. 9.61–2). The Persian Wars arose in large part as vengeance for religious transgressions, and the historian fittingly makes the divine prominent in the last great battle.

In the event, Mardonius falls and his men are routed by Spartans, though his body is mysteriously not found (Hdt. 9.63–5, 84). In a post-battle assessment of bravery on each side, as at Salamis, Herodotus poignantly says that the sole survivor of Thermopylae, Aristodemus, was by far the bravest but others denied him that honor since he sought to die to redress his dishonor (Hdt. 9.71). The lavish quarters of Mardonius cause Pausanias “to show the stupidity of the leader of the Medes” to the other Greeks (Hdt. 9.82). Again the theme of quantity over quality characterizes the barbarians.

The battle of Mycale immediately follows when the Samians plead with the Greeks to come from Delos, as they do (Hdt. 9.90–2). The prophet for the fleet was Deïphonus, whose father was cheated of territory but in the end given prophecy by the gods (Hdt. 9.92–4) – the lessons being that justice is done in the end and divine favor is with the Greeks for now, but could turn on them if they slight the gods. The Persians opt to fight near the sea but not on it. A herald’s wand mysteriously found on the beach is a sign that the Greeks won at Plataea on the same day, evidence of divine intervention, which encourages the Greek army (Hdt. 9.100). The Spartans and the Athenians fight

separately but in unison, the Athenians driving the foe off (Hdt. 9.102). The action effectively frees the Ionians and islanders for the time being, reversing earlier oppression, though the Spartans choose not to stay and the Athenians remain in Ionia (Hdt. 9.106). The ongoing rivalry among Greeks continues, and the Athenians' clinging to Ionia is a prelude to the Athenian "empire" (Flower and Marincola 2002: 205–7).

A penultimate scene returns us to the court of Xerxes, an ominous presence that remains, highlighted by the story of Xerxes' lust for the wife of his brother and general Masistes (Hdt. 9.108–13). This coda on Xerxes sharply contrasts Persian with Greek behavior, especially Pausanias' kindness to a prostitute (Hdt. 9.76); it shows the weakness of Persian males and their women's strength; it links, in ring composition with the Gyges–Candaules story, the fatal promise of a man to a woman; and it illustrates the despotism that the Greeks narrowly escaped (Flower and Marincola 2002: 291–3).

The final, terrifying tale is a masterful prism of major themes and an ominous projection of the future. At Sestos the Athenians besiege and take the city. Artyactes, the local governor, steals the treasure of the legendary hero Protesilaus, the first Greek slain in the Trojan War (Hom. *Il.* 2.700–2), and has intercourse with women in the hero shrine there, a double sacrilege (Hdt. 9.116). Artyactes appropriately becomes the last pro-Persian casualty in the Persian Wars, slain by Athenians. At the promontory where Xerxes bridged the waters, the Athenians nail Artyactes to a board and hang him from it. His son is stoned in front of him. This crucifixion occurs at the crossroads of Asia and Europe and is ordered by Xanthippus, father of the great Pericles. The episode thus hints at a figurative crossover of power, where a brutal Athenian hegemony promises to become heir to Xerxes' Persia (Hdt. 9.120; Tracy 2002: 315–19).

The last chapter (Hdt. 9.122) is a flashback to the beginning of Persian imperialism, which Cyrus warned against from the outset. An ancestor of Artyactes was Artembares, who advised Cyrus that the Persians should move to another, more fertile land, any land of their neighbors or of those farther beyond, whom they could occupy and be "more wonderful" (*thōmastōteroi*) to a greater number of people. But Cyrus warns that soft lands breed soft men; so go, but be prepared to be slaves to others rather than to rule. The final injunction is to live right and to rule or be ruled. Xerxes embodies the moral softening that Cyrus feared.

Conclusions

More than has been usually appreciated, Herodotus brings to the new genre of history a central focus on human nature as it relates to power, desiring it,

resisting it, and effecting its balance. He observes the dynamics of authority within and between cities, empires, and peoples, not by himself explicitly formulating “laws” of how or why power is established or changed, but by showing a panoply of examples from which readers can reach their own conclusions. He hints constantly and displays the arbitrariness of power, how it is obtained, and how different forms of rule can promote or deviate from justice and rational fairness. Self-interest, rhetorical persuasion, trust in dubious divine signs, and irrational emotions of ambition, greed, hate, and fear time and again drive off course historical agents, including Greeks. Exceptionally wise warners, such as Solon and Artabanus, only prove the rule and point to how tragic outcomes might have been avoided. Yet the narrative is in the end not wholly pessimistic. Though replete with examples of human folly in the stories of conflict, the *Histories* implicitly advocate values rarely witnessed: the fair and moderate administration of power by rulers, thoughtful and courageous engagement on the part of the ruled, and restraint from retribution for its own sake. Embodied in the tragic figures of Croesus, Darius, and Xerxes are the paradigms of power, how it is blindly sought, hotly maintained, and extended beyond reason, in each case through self-destructive campaigns. The debate on constitutions in Book 3 and the constant reference to the contemporary superpowers, Sparta and Athens, highlight the connection of the Persian narrative to that of the very different characters of the two states almost “fated,” or predetermined by their natures, to clash later in the fifth century. Xerxes cites a “law” of human imperialism and seeks a kingdom that reaches the heavens (Hdt. 7.8). Demaratus tells the king that for the Greeks “law” (*nomos*) is the despot that they fear (Hdt. 7.104). But the issues are not always reducible to polarities such as barbarian–Greek, good–evil, and so on. Notably, among the Greek forces there are fissures and tensions, for example in Books 7, 8, and 9, when disagreements arise about whether and how to face the foe. The tensions can result in missteps, but they can also be negotiated through liberal contestation, often yielding success.

The narrative is also not narrowly framed, but capacious in including digressions or brief observations on the complex customs of the barbarian “Other,” often with a sense of Hellenic superiority, but at times with a suspension of judgment or an expression of awe at particular achievements. Thus the Herodotean narrative in its rich, idiosyncratic, epic–dramatic fashion establishes certain core principles regarding human behavior and the nature of power. These subjects remain at the core of the narrative of the next great historian, Thucydides, though with a very different approach.

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3

Thucydides on the Ends of Power

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing in Rome around 30 to 8 BC, a period of intense and ambivalent Roman fascination with Hellenic culture, sketched Thucydides' place in historiography as follows:

Then came Thucydides, who was unwilling either to confine his history to a single region, as did Hellanicus, or to elaborate into a single work the achievements of the Greeks and barbarians in every land, as did Herodotus; but, scorning the former as trifling and petty and of little value to the readers and rejecting the latter as too comprehensive to fall within the purview of human reckoning with regard to the exactness of modes of behavior, he selected a single war ... and gave his attention to the writing about this.

(D.H. *Th.* 6, Pritchett 1975, adapted).

Selection and formation of the topic for a major historical work was a crucial and open question at this early time in the tradition. Thucydides' contemporary Hellanicus of Lesbos (c. 480–395 BC) wrote *Atthis*, the first history of Attica, and he is the only historian named by Thucydides, who does so for the purpose of criticizing his too brief and chronologically inaccurate treatment of the period between the Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian War (Th. 1.97.2). Dionysius devalues the range and the utility of local history in itself by these comments, echoing in part Thucydides' own criticisms. Herodotus on the other hand, in Dionysius' estimation, erred in selecting too broad a topic, forfeiting exactness with fascinating yet distracting digressions on non-Greek customs. Thucydides refined and redefined the parameters of one type of history in a way that held for centuries thereafter, namely through focus on war with a close narrative of the motives and strategies of combatants.

The genre of history is intensely refined and narrowed by Thucydides mainly in response to Herodotus, but partly his history reflects also the works of other prose chroniclers (*logioi*), Homer, lyric poetry, tragedy, the sophists and medical authors. Thucydides is also in dialogue with all of these predecessors and can be seen as directly selecting from among many aspects of their subject matter, themes, style, and method. The author rigorously excludes from his narrative all elements that, in his view, contain patriotic fiction and poetic exaggeration, maintaining his focus intensely on war as a political “upheaval” (*kinēsis*, Th. 1.1.2) of states and on the “human element” (*to*

anthrōpinon, Th. 1.22.4) – which owes something to Protagoras’ (c. 485–c. 415 BC) human-centered cosmos (see Irwin 1989: 59–60).

In the historiographic tradition Thucydides’ work is fashioned for a more literate public, an audience more keenly conscious of rhetorical manipulation, and one situated at a time when prose was becoming ever more crucial for the Greek states and poetry was less highly regarded among the ruling elite (see Plato’s *Ion* and *Republic*; also P. Murray 1996). Even so, Thucydides can be read as an extended allegory on human “upheavals” with a utility for all future citizens and leaders (Th. 1.22.4). He happened to write about a war that he personally experienced and that was in his view greater than others, but the essential experience of war in human life suggests that he might have narrated any major conflict to illustrate the same human truths.

Life and Times

The historian’s text is the only reliable evidence for his life (fuller discussion in Rhodes 2009: xxiv–xxviii). We can estimate that Thucydides was born around 460–455 BC, since he was likely at least thirty years old when serving as a general in 424 BC and seems to have been young at the start of the war (Th. 5.26.5). He was born in the deme of Halimous and was a son of Olorus, possibly the great grandson of King Olorus of Thrace, Cimon’s Thracian grandfather. He is distantly related to the Alcmaeonids Pericles and Alcibiades and more closely to Miltiades, his great-grandfather, and to the politicians Thucydides son of Melisias and Cimon, both his great-uncles. He may have been in the cavalry because of his elite status, and may have heard Pericles’ funeral oration in the winter of 431–430 BC. The historian himself suffered from the plague in 430 BC (Th. 2.48.3). He possibly ascended the typical course of captain and regimental commander (*lochagos* and *taxiarch*) before standing as general from his tribe, Leontis. He was assigned as general to Northern Greece, logically in view of his Thracian family connections and their lease to gold mines there (Th. 4.105). Thucydides was stationed at Thasos when Brasidas successfully took Amphipolis in 424 BC, despite the former’s best efforts to intercept the latter (Th. 4.102–8). Despite his securing of the nearby city of Eion, Thucydides realized that he would face trial at home, and thus chose exile (Th. 5.26). His military career was over, and yet the situation presented an opportunity for him to devote more time to chronicling the conflict. Just as importantly, he was able to travel freely (except to Athens) and interview witnesses and informants from both sides. Ironically, the author’s own misadventure at war afforded a greater refinement of content and a broader balance of sources to his account.

I certainly remember that all along, when the war began until it ended, there were many who prophesized that it must last thrice nine years. I lived

through all of it when I was of an age to comprehend and had my mind engaged, in order to know with some exactness; it also happened that I was exiled from my city for twenty years after the command at Amphipolis, and, being present at the activities on both sides, especially the Peloponnesians, unoccupied because of my exile, I understood these all the more. (Th. 5.26, Lattimore – and so passim from here on, unless otherwise indicated)

We may guess that Thucydides returned to Athens in 404 BC. As he refers to the end of the war in 404 BC (e.g., Th. 2.65.10–13), we can guess that he survived a few years after that, dying about 400 BC. Pausanias (1.23.11) recounts a decree whose vote to recall Thucydides from exile was carried by a certain Oinobius, adding that Thucydides was murdered on his way home and that his funeral memorial is not far from the Melitian Gate. The ancient biographer Marcellinus (*Vit. Thuc.* 33), generally unreliable, says that Thucydides died in Thrace and had a cenotaph in Athens. Speculation about a sudden death may have arisen from the incompleteness of the text. Whatever the truth of the story, the Melitian Gate location gains some credibility when we know that the burial “monuments of [his relative] Cimon” were nearby (Marcellin. *Vit. Thuc.* 17).

Thucydides’ personal political views are, to judge from his text, sophisticated and notoriously difficult to line up with those of any specific individuals or groups leaning to the traditionalist elite or to the new thinkers of his day. Scholars have variously labeled him as pro-Periclean or elite, conservative, and antidemocratic (e.g., McGregor 1956; Chambers 1957). The text evidences some affinities to various camps or persons, but the author’s views probably changed over time. His negative views of Cleon are well delineated (Woodhead 1960) and may have given rise to the story in Marcellinus that Cleon decreed his exile. We may detect sympathy with Nicias’ fear of the “natures” (*phuseis*) of the Athenians (Th. 7.48), and he scorned the irrational reaction of the demos at Athens (Th. 8.1) and elsewhere. He seems to have had a positive view of Pericles, whose speeches all stand without direct responses, most brilliantly the funeral oration. Yet we must ask if the historian was a dedicated Periclean or simply used Pericles’ image to make his own political points, critical of Pericles’ successors (Th. 2.65). The historian had his criticisms of democracy (e.g., Th. 2.65 and 8.24) and he highly praised the rule of the Five Thousand as “the best government” of Athens, a “moderate mixture of the many and the few,” a hybrid of democracy and oligarchy (Th. 8.97).

Thucydides himself had witnessed the last years of growth of the Athenian power over other Greek states in the years just prior to the Peloponnesian War, as a boy growing up during the First Peloponnesian War of about 461–446 BC, and then the Athenian expansion in the early 430s. He “recorded the war ... beginning as soon as it came into being, expecting it to be great and

more noteworthy than previous ones ...” (Th. 1.1.1). So he started the project when the war “came into being” (*kathistamenou*), a vague enough term that includes not just the formal declaration of hostilities, but also the events leading up to it that made the conflict seem inevitable. In short, his authorial engagement starts with the movement to war and is carried on until its end in 404 BC.

Composition, Style, and Structure of the Work

Thucydides’ first sentence, characteristically lengthy and challenging, carries a programmatic importance, like that of Herodotus, yet the Athenian is clearly in dialogue with and challenging his predecessor:

Thucydides, an Athenian, recorded the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, writing how they waged it against each other and beginning his work as soon as the war broke out in expectation that it would be a major one and notable beyond all previous wars, basing this assumption on the fact that both sides came into it flourishing in overall preparedness and on seeing that the rest of the Hellenes were aligning themselves with one side or the other, some immediately and others at least intending to. This was certainly the greatest disturbance to affect the Hellenes and a considerable number of barbarians – one might say the majority of mankind.

(Th. 1.1.1–2)

The author puts himself first and as the agent in the first verb, unlike Herodotus. The verb “recorded” (*xunegrapse*), literally “wrote together,” might more accurately be translated “collected information on and wrote an account of.” The toil of gathering and assessing evidence, orally, visually, and in writing, was essential to his method. As it was for his predecessor, the clear subject is a war, and Thucydides also uses Herodotus’ exact verb “they waged war” (*epolemēsan*). But the Athenian does not mention the “wonders” accomplished by men and applies a strict economy to the war proper. He then displays his position as contemporary to events and his prescient observation of its beginning. Preparation, in terms of amassing navies and armies, was evident, as was the movement of allies. Thucydides’ noun for disturbance (upheaval, movement), *kinēsis*, shares the root of the verb describing the action of an earthquake (*ekinēthē*: Th. 2.8.3, of Delos). So the massive realignment to each side implicitly resembles the enormous and destructive expenditure of natural force, and also parallels the shifting of land on either side of a fault.

There is no reason to doubt the author’s assertion that he saw the conflict coming and began recording it from the start; and, as noted earlier, he lived

beyond its end in 404 BC. What we cannot know is exactly how the work was composed over the nearly three decades of fighting and whether his own views of its crucial causes shifted in this time – and, if so, how. F. W. Ulrich originally argued in 1846 that Books 1–4.51 and 5.84–8.1 were complete, but that the rest is a rough draft in which inconsequential documents are cited verbatim and direct speeches are lacking (Ulrich 1968). This was followed by others taking sides in the argument: “separatists,” notably A. Andrewes (1981) and J. de Romilly (2005; see also Dover in Andrewes 1981), assume that Books 5 and 8 are not complete, while “unitarians” – who command overwhelming consensus today – see the work essentially in final form, apart from the abrupt breaking off of the narrative of 411 BC at the end of Book 8 (Finley 1967: 118–70; Hornblower 2008: 1–4).

In terms of literary reception, the debt to Homer is as evident in Thucydides as it was in Herodotus, though the divine dimension is sparse and the Athenian’s work is enriched greatly by intertextuality (that is, by a productive interaction with other texts and genres), notably with lyric poetry, drama, medical writing, epigraphy, and early, Presocratic philosophy, for example sophists (Hornblower 1987: 110–35; Rood 1998a; Finley 1967: 1–54). He calls the Athenian defeat in Sicily “total destruction,” using the term *panōlethria*, also used by Herodotus to describe the destruction of Troy (Th. 7.87; cf. Hdt. 2.120), and echoing the epic magnitude of the defeat. He quotes the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 3.104 as evidence of history, and his reasoning about the Trojan War at 1.3–1 certainly relies on the evidence of epic legend. From tragedy, the historian certainly followed the natural story sequence of *hubris* and blind folly (*ate*), of a *peripeteia*, pathos, and falling action, as applied to the larger story of the expedition to Sicily (Cornford 1907; Connor 1984; Parry 1972; Macleod 1982). The famous sentence on the great plague runs close to the description of prognostic method used in Hippocratic writings: “I shall say what it was like in its course and describe here ... the symptoms by which anyone who studies it cannot possibly fail to recognize it with foreknowledge, if it ever strikes again” (Th. 2.48; Hornblower 1987: 131–3). Inscriptional evidence is cited fairly frequently as verification of events or facts – for example at 1.132 on the Spartan Pausanias; at 5.18–19 on the Peace of Nicias; at 5.47 on the “quadruple alliance” verified by an extant inscription; at 6.55 on Hippias; or at 6.54 on Pisistratus (Hornblower 1996: 113–19; 1987: 88–91). Thucydides reflects more closely than Herodotus the philosophical trends of his time, notably the views of some “Presocratics,” particularly the sophists – a group of itinerant teachers in fifth-century Greece, most prominent among them being Democritus and Antiphon, especially regarding their views of human nature and power.

Intellectually, his focus on “the human” in the narrative begs the question of whether this element was based on a fixed human “nature” rooted in our material make-up or was based on adaptable custom. The earliest ancient

discussions of *phusis* and *nomos*, nature and culture (literally “custom,” formal or informal), are often attached to the individuals collectively known as “the sophists” and thought to have brought the nature–culture dichotomy to the fore (Kerferd 1981; Guthrie 1971). Sophistic thought and style was certainly present in Thucydides’ work (Finley 1967: 55–117), but he was also generally alive to the intellectual milieu of philosophical and poetic discussions of his time, and here is where we might trace his intellectual foundations. Thucydides has close affinities in particular with the early atomist philosopher Democritus, who described a delicate balance between reason and emotion (Hussey 1985: 34–56; Barnes 1979; Sprague 2001). Terence Irwin explains how, for Democritus, everything is a consequence of general laws of the movement of atoms; there is no “cosmic justice.” The first human beings lived a “disorderly and bestial life”; fear, not intelligence, teaches them to collect in groups. Only experience and gradual development taught them what to do; “and in general need itself was the teacher for human beings.” Neither free choice nor design (human or divine), but inevitable reaction to circumstances caused human beings to characterize their way of life (Irwin 1989: 47–52). Or, as it was rephrased in the seventeenth century by Thomas Hobbes, an admirer and translator of Thucydides: “The life of man [in his natural state is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short’ which would lead to a ‘war of all against all” (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch. 13; cf. especially Th. 3.82–3 and 5.105).

Stylistically, Thucydides is remarkable for his innovative use of vocabulary and strives for almost anti-Herodotean sentence structures in the Greek that seek deliberately to slow the reader down (to encourage reflection?), a style greatly fashioned after sophists like Gorgias and Antiphon. Thucydides’ style deliberately mimics the difficulty of concepts in a challenging, allusive prose. The difficult style is prominent in speeches and a few crucial digressions, notoriously in Pericles’ funeral oration at 2.35–46 and in the excursus on civil strife at 3.82–3. Difficulty is most evident at the sentence level in the prolific use of abstract nouns and in the unsettling ambiguity of referents. This is acutely the case in some orations where the influence of the sophists is clear, for example Cleon’s rant against the assembly:

You are the ones responsible ... you have the habit of approaching words as a spectacle and actions as a recitation ... perfect at being tricked by novelty in speech and not wishing to make sense of what has been scrutinized.

(Th. 3.38)

In the Herodotean narrative the interactions and emotions of individuals certainly figure largely, but, in contrast to Thucydides, human motivations are rarely distilled into abstract laws, and throughout the grand narrative of the Persian Wars the reader is constantly reminded of divine agency. Thucydides’

characters in effect speak a much more conceptual language than Herodotus', as does Thucydides himself in his narration, for example in my literal renderings: "For to speak moderately is difficult in [a situation] in which even the appearance of the truth is not secure" (instead of the simpler expression "one must speak up when the truth is not secure") (Th. 2.35); or: "The division from one another in opinion in a distrustful manner was carried on to a great degree" (Th. 3.83). Phrases like "the being angry of their attitude" are preferred to "their angry attitude" (Th. 2.59); also "the invisible [aspect] of future succeeding" instead of "uncertain future success" (Th. 2.42) (Rusten 1989: 21–32; Allison 1997b: 19–34; Loraux 2009). Sentences and meanings are further complicated by variation from standard expressions, for example the shift from a noun to an infinitive in parallel phrases and the use of interlocking word order. A deliberately abstract and abstruse style forces slower reading and closer examination of the thought, perhaps even irritation, to challenge assumptions.

Thucydides followed the Herodotean (and Homeric) tradition of frequently inserting direct speeches into the narrative for multiple purposes, including characterization, exposition of motivation and strategy, and reenactment of a debate. But Thucydides revolutionized historical writing by making explicit, in the famous programmatic chapter 1.22, the generic methods and criteria for the inclusion of speeches versus the narrative of events:

recalling the exact words was difficult for me regarding speeches I heard myself and for my informants about speeches made elsewhere; in the way I thought each would have said what was especially required in the given situation, I have stated accordingly, with the closest possible fidelity on my part to the overall sense of what was actually said. About the actions of the war, however, I considered it was my responsibility to write neither as I learned from the chance informant nor according to my opinion, but after examining what I witnessed myself and what I learned from others, with utmost possible accuracy in each case.

This says little about how speeches serve the major *themes* of the work. Rather it affirms the author's sincere attempt to adhere to accuracy in reporting words and deeds, given his review of evidence and his aim for his speeches to paraphrase the "overall sense" of what each situation required. On closer scrutiny of the whole work, we can see that the polarity of words and deeds is not so sharp (indirect speech, inscriptions, and so on falling in between) and that the historian is asking readers to trust his judgment of what actually happened in deeds and "what is required (to be said)" in speeches, in other words what he sees as the most crucial aspects. Hornblower (1987: 145) notes the tension here between the subjective function of the speeches – giving what is required, as the historian sees it – and the objective aspect – what actually happened. Of course every historian, ancient and modern, confronts the same tension, using judgment (*gnōmē*) to filter the "required"

elements and present “facts” according to the author’s criteria of importance. Ultimately for Thucydides what is “required” depends upon his view of human motivation, how individuals respond to stimuli of fear, desire, beliefs, and so on. The reporting of “facts” without the author’s subjective sense of human behavior becomes a meaningless string of incidents.

Thucydides’ concern with speeches and with criteria for establishing veracity also suggests a different role for his speeches from the one they have in Herodotus. The speeches in both authors afford “windows” into the strategic thinking of historical agents. But in Thucydides there are many more “paired” speeches, two or more giving different sides of the argument at a crucial time; there are of course in Herodotus a few clustered speeches (e.g., the debate on constitutions in Book 3; the discussion of Xerxes, Mardonius, and Artabanus early in Book 7; Themistocles’ discussions in Book 8). But there are some forty-six paired speeches (direct or indirect, including the Melian dialogue at 5.84–116) in Thucydides, of the 141 direct or indirect speeches in total in his work (Stadter 1973: 3–15). Another observation is that Thucydides uses fewer but usually much longer speeches than Herodotus. There are an amazing 861 speeches in Herodotus (including letters and oracles), including 409 direct speeches (Lang 1984: 142–9). But Herodotean speeches occupy a smaller proportion of the whole text: Thucydides, by one count, uses direct speeches more than Herodotus, namely in 20–25 percent of his text, versus 18 percent in Herodotus (compare 50 percent in the *Iliad*) (Scardino 2007: 47 and 117). Though Thucydides uses speeches generally like Herodotus (and Homer), to dramatize events, characterize individuals, and convey themes, he arguably uses speeches with a greater focus on his themes, notably with reflections on power and human nature, a focus that one scholar calls “an analytic and implicitly interpretive commentary in place of explicit authorial reflection” (Scardino 2007: 461). The fact that Thucydides’ speeches are longer and more often in pairs also allows more space for analyzing abstract themes in his speeches. For instance the first pair of speeches, those by the Corinthians and Corcyreans in Athens (Th. 1.31–44), represents their respective arguments for what is just (a favor owed) versus what is pragmatic (more to Athens’ advantage) (Hornblower 1987: 47). Later in the debate in Athens about the punishment of the rebellious Mytileneans, the opposing speakers each argue that justice and self-interest are not mutually exclusive, both speakers invoking principles of human nature and power in their arguments, as will be discussed below (Andrews 2000: 45–62; Manuwald 2009). Speeches are closely interconnected with narrative, in a way that invites and challenges readers to become participants both in the project of rational, historical analysis and in the more Herodotean process of emotional engagement in speeches as events reperformed (Morrison 2006a).

Avoiding Herodotus’ liberal use of digressions, Thucydides’ *History* closely adheres in overall structure to the chronology of the Peloponnesian War (431–

404 BC). And, unlike Hellanicus, he keenly seeks to establish a chronology of events meaningful across Greek states, each with its own calendric system (Hornblower 1987: 84; 1996: 490–3; Gomme 1945: 389–94). Book 1 serves as an introduction, with an extended proem in chapters 1–23 and a digression in chapters 89–117 on the period of 479–439 BC, linking the narrative of Herodotus with his own. The so-called Archidamian War (431–421 BC) is narrated in 2.1 to 5.24, then the uncertain Peace of Nicias period (421–415) falls in the balance of Book 5, chapters 25 to 116; the Sicilian War occupies Books 6 and 7, and Book 8 presents part of the Deceleian War, obviously incomplete, ending abruptly in mid-narrative of the year 411 BC. The grand narrative, like that of Herodotus, follows the causal chain of events leading to the conflict, and it describes the progress of a brilliant, dynamic, tyrant-like and finally internally divided Athens. A comparison with the expansive Persian rule is implicit.

The Nature and Culture of Power

Thucydides' text is focused on power not merely as a leitmotif among other themes. It stands out as a major topic around which many other points are organized. What constitutes power, how it is acquired, kept, and lost are matters of consistent interest. War, of course, the explicit topic of the work, may be understood as an armed, violent, open, and often prolonged conflict among states or large social groups with opposing interests. Success in war depends greatly, though not entirely, on the material bases of power, namely manpower (further qualified by numbers, experience and skill or training) and financial resources (Thucydides' *periousia chrēmātōn*). The material bases of power are thematic throughout Thucydides' narrative, beginning with the capsule history of earlier resources and might (Th. 1.1–22) and carrying through issues of tribute paid by allies (Th. 1.96), the immense Athenian capital at hand at the war's start (Th. 2.13), the drain on funds from an early campaign (Th. 3.17), to the re-tooling following the Sicilian catastrophe (Th. 8.1) (Kallet-Marx 1993; Kallet 2001).

In the discussion of Herodotus, we noted the general Greek terms for power and the importance in historical writing of the narrative of power among groups and individuals. With Thucydides, power is arguably even more central to the narrative, where the dynamics of power are also more explicitly linked to what Thucydides and many ancient Greeks thought of as “human nature,” *anthrōpeia phusis*. As a rough index, the most common power term, *dunamis*, occurs 51 times in Herodotus and 130 times in Thucydides. Thucydides did not first introduce the theme of power to historical writing, but he proposed a more extensive and refined view of its origins and operation.

Pericles' description of the achievements of Athens at its acme of empire in 431, as Thucydides reports it in a famous passage, fixes the power (*dunamis*) of the city as its primary claim to historical fame:

In summary I claim that our city as a whole is an education for Hellas, and that it is among us as individuals, in my opinion, that a single man would represent an individual as self-sufficient for the most varied forms of conduct, and with the most attractive qualities. And that this is not boastful speaking for the occasion but factual truth our city's very power [*dunamis*], which we acquired because of these characteristics, proclaims clearly ... Through great proofs, and by exhibiting power in no way unwitnessed, we will be admired by this and future generations, thus requiring no Homer ... since we have compelled every sea and land to become open to our daring and populated every region with lasting monuments of our harm and good.

(Th. 2.41)

The claim of self-sufficiency for the individual puts Pericles' view in direct contradiction to Solon's dictum that no man is self-sufficient, suggesting either a justified exception or a possibly hybristic boast, despite the self-conscious denial by the speaker (see Hdt. 1.32; Scanlon 1994: 145–56). Athenian power is not described as some abstract potential, but as a visible display of Athens' total resources and actions to this point. It is also striking that among the “admired” manifestations of power are included Athenians' access to places via compulsion and their leaving monuments of good and harm both – helping when possible and harming when necessary. Again, is the claim meant to be ominous, or simply to display a bold new realism?

A classic formulation of the rule of power appears earlier, in the words of the Athenians speaking at Sparta in defense of their building an empire:

On the same reasoning we have done nothing remarkable, nor contrary to ordinary human behavior, if we not only accepted an empire when it was offered but also did not let it go, submitting to the great forces of prestige, fear, and self-interest – not as the originators of such conduct, moreover, since the rule always existed that the weaker is held down by the stronger – and, besides, considering ourselves deserving and so regarded by you as well, until now when you calculate your own interests and use the argument about justice.

(Th. 1.76.2)

Either as a literary allusion or as a reflection of a cultural theme of the age, the passage recalls the statement of Xerxes when the king at the start of his expedition justifies his undertaking by saying: “it is no new law [*nomos*] that I initiate among you; it has come to me from tradition” (Hdt. 7.8a.1; Scanlon 1994: 171–3). The parallel in any case suggests a criticism of the Athenian

imperial drive as Persian-like that has been noticed in this work (Connor 1984: passim, esp. 156, 176). Yet instead of saying “the god leads us on,” as Xerxes does, the Athenians trace the motivation to the fundamentally human values of honor, fear, and self-interest. The desire to grow combines instincts of self-preservation with those of self-aggrandizement.

The Athenian “natural” law of power is then importantly qualified: “And all are entitled to praise whenever they follow human nature [*anthōpeia phusis*] by ruling others and end up behaving more justly than their actual power [*dunamis*] dictated” (Th. 1.76.3). Ethical considerations such as justice are therefore not essential to the “law of nature,” but are desirable and in fact have been followed, according to the Athenian claim of treating allies equitably when possible (Th. 1.77). In any case, the formulation shows some social “conscience” about a mighty state wielding power.

The prewar enunciation of the law has a close counterpart in the later Melian dialogue, in which nameless Athenian speakers again assert the law of power:

For nothing in what we assert or in what we are going to do is a departure from men’s concept of god and attitude toward themselves. According to our understanding, divinity, it would seem, and mankind, as has always been obvious, are under an innate compulsion to rule wherever empowered. Without being either the ones who made this law [*nomos*] or the first to apply it after it had been laid down, we applied it as one in existence when we took it up and one that we leave behind to endure for all time, since we know that you and anyone else who attained power [*dunamis*] like ours would act accordingly.

(Th. 5.105)

Again the core of the “law,” a common human impulse to rule where one can, is virtually the same as the one spoken by the Athenians at Sparta (Th. 1.76), despite the very different situations. Here the neutral Melians refuse to surrender and side with Athens, and Athens is justifying the present compulsion of force, and not, as earlier, explaining past expansionism. Most notably, the dialogue is prefaced by Athens’ explicit rejection of appeals to right and wrong, and gives the instruction

to deal with the possibilities defined by what both parties really believe, understanding as well as we do that in human considerations justice is what is decided when equal forces are opposed, while possibilities are what superiors impose and the weak acquiesce to (Th. 5.89).

A crucial question for understanding Thucydides, and one on which scholars disagree, is whether the law of the rule of the stronger is one to which the historian subscribes as a political and military reality or an assumed motivation for which he censures Athens. Put another way (to avoid the impossible task of positing authorial intentions), does the text encourage

readers to admit the reality of the rule of the stronger to the exclusion of considerations of justice? Does the dropping of all pretense of justice in the Melian dialogue indicate an increasing degree of Athenian brutality? Does labeling the rule of the stronger as a “law” (*nomos*) here reflect a more rigid attitude than that of the Athenians in 432 BC, where it is named simply “established practice” (*kathestōtou*, Th. 1.76.2)? We cannot here give pat answers to these questions; very possibly Thucydides himself did not have any. The juxtaposition of the dialogue with the beginning of the Sicilian expedition in Book 6 has led many to see an ironic commentary on a kind of hybriatic “pride before the fall” in the Sicilian defeat (Cornford 1907 is the earliest formulation of this thesis; see also Grene 1965; Macleod 1974: 385–400; Bosworth 1993; Morrison 2006b). And yet Athens is “down” but not “out” after the Sicilian books, in fact fighting on for seven more years. Is there a deliberate, tragic arc in the narrative from Periclean idealism to tyrannical imperialism, or does this view impose too much fictional fancy? If intelligent modern, and presumably also ancient, readers see ambiguous perspectives in the text, then is it not reasonable to surmise that the historian sought to portray not who is ethically right or wrong in the Melian episode, but how complex, yet common, human motivation led to rigidity in both positions (Tordoff 2005)? Thucydides’ nuanced presentation, if we are correct, is much more open than that of the later narrative of Plato’s *Republic*, Book 1, set about 422 BC but written sometime in the first half of the fourth century, in which the sophist Thrasymachus baldly equates might (*dunamis*) with “right” (*to dikaion*) (Guthrie 1971: 294–8). This may be an extension or exaggerated version of Thucydides’ Athenians (for whom might does not *make* right but can reasonably *exclude* it), but it is a plausible position for some members of the Athenian elite in Thucydides’ time.

If, as we have suggested, power exists in a reciprocal balance (see [Chapter 2](#) here, “Theme 2: Power”), then there is another important position expressed in the speech of the Syracusan Hermocrates to a conference of Sicilians in 424 BC. Hermocrates presents essentially the counterpoint to the Athenian argument of a natural rule of the powerful, namely that it is *natural* for those oppressed by others to resist when possible:

For the Athenians to reach for more and lay plans in this way, one can make every allowance, and I do not blame those who wish to rule those who are willing to be subjects; for it is ever part of human nature to rule those who yield, just as it is to resist those who encroach.

(Th. 4.61.5)

A rule of resistance is part of the law of power (Connor 1984: 57; cf. Ostwald 1988: 57). It also appeals to human nature as a basis for self-defense, perhaps invoking fear instead of hope as the operative emotion. Hermocrates may not be saying that striving for unity is natural, but he does say that resistance to

subordination by a transgressor is natural. And, interestingly, he seems not to blame a powerful state for ruling where it can.

In sum, we see significant yet disparate views of human nature and power, namely Pericles' praise of Athenian power, the rule formulated by the Athenians in Books 1 and 5, and Hermocrates' correlative rule of resisting repression, a list to which more could be added. What can we conclude from them? The examples so far are not directly in the historian's voice, but are assigned to speeches of historical characters. Clearly the historian attaches great importance to the ways in which agents of history focus on underlying patterns of human nature related to the operation of power politics, whether it is a desire for acquisition of resources, security, military forces, and rule more widely over others, or the fear attendant on the acquisition of such power, or the hope and fear of subjects who resist the imposition of external rule. At the base of these dynamics are human emotions and reason expressed as the struggle of one group against another.

Human Nature, Norms and Exceptions

On Human Nature is the title of a work in the Hippocratic corpus, attributed to Hippocrates' son-in-law, Polybus, who lived around 400 BC, and discussing physical aspects of humans. But Thucydides is the first Greek author, to our knowledge, to present the concept of "human nature" (*anthrōpeia phusis*) as a somewhat predictable system related to the working of the mind and of judgment. It is difficult, and arguably misdirected, to posit any rigidly quasi-scientific concept of "psychology" in Thucydides. His narrative seems to derive laws by deduction from specific situations, or he relates the law observed by agents in the narrative. In any case, his focus on thought and behavior allows us to sketch his general views on human nature and to observe how he associates it with the power of the state. One source of Thucydides' system may have been Antiphon, the fifth-century sophist, who may or may not be the same as the orator Antiphon praised by Thucydides at 8.68 ("a man second to no Athenian of his time in ability and a master both at developing plans and at stating his conclusions"). Arguing in the midst of the nature–culture debate of the sophists, Antiphon said that the rules of justice only frustrate the stronger laws of human nature, and he viewed human nature as the same for Greeks and non-Greeks ("The requirements of the laws are supplemental but the requirements of nature are necessary," Antiphon Fr. 90 A DK, col. 1, with Gagarin and Woodruff 1995: 245; on the unity of nature, see Antiphon Fr. B 44 DK, col. 2, with Woodruff 2010).

Prominently in the programmatic introduction to his work, the historian hopes that his work too will be useful to "any who wish to look at the plain truth about past events and those that at some future time, in accordance with

human nature, will recur in similar or comparable ways” (Th. 1.22.4). “Human nature” in Greek here is literally “the human thing” or “the human situation” (*to anthōpinon*), possibly encompassing a wider nexus of social, cultural, and psychological realities. In this passage its importance is that the recurrence or pattern in human history is directly linked to human nature in the broadest sense, as a calculable constant in an equation.

Thucydides presents a text struggling to define “the human” within an anthropology based on fundamentally material notions of nature. It asks what is essential to humans and what is epiphenomenal or culturally elective. His concern is not only with this question of essence, but also with a deep interest in agents’ thought processes. Attentive readers, ancient and modern, are expected to see the *History*’s consistent patterns of thought incorporated in “human nature,” a term under which Thucydides discusses thought, emotions, and the human process of arriving at decisions, mostly without specific connection to his views on power. Human nature in the text can be characterized broadly in terms of emotion or impulse and evaluation or judgment (*orgē* and *gnomē*), these being the two essential aspects of human motivation (Huart 1968; Luginbill 1999). The two more often work in concert, not necessarily in conflict. When a person is driven by an emotive urge, he also evaluates the “downside” to the impulse. *Gnomē* then is not so much “reason” as it is a faculty of judgment often swayed by emotion-driven inclinations, and it is at the core of much of the historian’s view of “human nature” (Luginbill 1999: 26; see Edmunds 1975a). Antiphon may have again shaped his thinking here, as the sophist posited a single, active, rational principle at work in both humans and nature, namely the “mind” (*gnōmē*), as in his work *Concord* (fr. 2): “For all men mind controls their body in matters of health and disease and everything else”; “Deprived of material she [mind, *gnōmē*] would order many good things badly” (Fr. B 14 DK, Guthrie 1971: 288).

The pairing of impulse and evaluation is thus not a polarity so much as the expression of a dual source of human decision making. The historian moreover uses a host of terms for intellection and analysis to specify clear and effective “logical” reasoning (e.g., *dianoia*: thought, intention, at Th. 1.84, 2.43, 2.61, 3.82, 5.111, etc.; *boulē*: counsel, advice; *boulēsis*: determination, will; *xunesis*: intelligence; see Huart 1968). A key function of the *History* is to model productive and unproductive reasoning. Note, for example, the high regard of Themistocles, a leader of optimum insight:

By native intelligence [*xunesis*], without preparing or supplementing it by study, he was with the briefest deliberation [*boulē*] the most effective in decisions [*gnomē*] about immediate situations and the best at conjecturing what would happen farthest into the future ... To sum up, this man, by the power [*dunamis*] of his nature [*phusis*], with rapid deliberation, was certainly supreme in his immediate grasp of what was necessary.

Contrast the shifting mood of the emotional Athenian public in its view of Pericles at the start of the war:

They [sc. Athenians] did not actually cease their anger against him altogether until they had punished him with a fine. And then, not much later, as a multitude is apt to behave, they elected him general and entrusted all their affairs to him.

(Th. 1.65)

Thus the historian observes the qualities of individuals or groups and notes them at crucial points. Later, when the Spartan Brasidas takes the city of Amphipolis in 424/3 BC, other cities revolt and Thucydides offers a similar analysis of the emotional logic of the group:

It was obvious that they could do so with impunity, a mistake about Athenian power as great as the obviousness of that power later on but their decisions were based more on vague wishes than on secure foresight, following the human habit of entrusting desires to heedless hopes, while using arbitrary reason to dismiss what is unacceptable.

(Th. 4.108.4)

The censure of the cities' inability to see Athenian power and their turn to empty hope serves as a foreshadowing of the Melians' poor reasoning in Book 5, yet here it is in Thucydides' own words.

Emotions often misdirect successful reasoning. "Hatred" (*misos*) becomes a leitmotif of bad decision making: the Greeks' hatred of the Spartan Pausanias is given as the major factor for Athens getting to lead the Delian League (Th. 1.96). By the period of the 450s BC, Corinth has an excessive hatred of Athens, generated by the Athenians' fortifying of the port of Megara (Th. 1.103). Being hated is a normal status for Athens, says Pericles (Th. 1.64). Hope, fear, and other emotions might be correspondingly traced as profound motivations throughout the narrative. Fear, for instance, includes a more rational dread (*deos*; Th. 1.75), while less rational fear (*phobos*) marks other reactions (Th. 1.23 and 1.88, of Sparta), and fear terms are often used by Athenians to manipulate others (Tompkins 2009). Spartan fear (*phobos*) of Athens is part of the "truest cause" of the war (Th. 1.23; 1.88), and fear (*phobos*) of Athens motivates many Greeks to become Spartan allies (Th. 2.8). Athenian success dispels Athenians' fear (*phobos*) of Sparta and leads to imperial ambitions in Sicily (Th. 6.11). A more rational fear (*deos*) prompts Athenians to obey the laws, can generally compel interstate obedience (Th. 3.45), and can unite allies in an opposition to Athens (Th. 6.33). A prudent fear explained by a good leader can instill unity in a chosen cause (Desmond 2006). Hope (*elpis*) is consistently seen as a force designed to mislead and hold unrealistic ambitions, denounced by Pericles (Th. 2.62), infamously

clung onto by the Melians (Th. 5.102–3), sought by the Mytileneans (Th. 3.39–40 and 45), and harbored in defeat by Nicias (Th. 7.77) (Gervasi 1984; Cook 2001).

Speakers, by way of persuading the audience to act, frequently note the use of reason or emotion to encourage correct analysis or to criticize incorrect reasoning, for example the censure of the fickle Athenian judgment voiced by the Athenian Cleon in the Mytilenean debate (Th. 3.38), as noted earlier. Cleon continues with a truism on human nature, while discussing how to treat those who revolt: “in all circumstances, it is human nature to despise conciliation and admire firmness” (Th. 3.39.5, adapted). Whatever one thinks of the validity of the sentiment, it occurs in the larger context of advocating the harsh treatment of Mytilene, an allied city-state that has revolted against Athenian rule.

The Athenian Diodotus responds to Cleon with an extended appeal to human nature:

It is natural for all men, both individually and collectively, to make mistakes, and there is no law that will prevent this seeing that people have truly used up all penalties in succession on the chance of lessening their injuries at the hands of criminals ... And in every case [both for the boldness of the poor and the ambition of the wealthy], hope and desire – the one leading while the other follows, the one thinking up a scheme while the other holds out the full assistance of fortune – do the greatest damage, and although invisible, they have power over perils that can be seen.

(Th. 3.45)

Diodotus’ reasoning follows from a fairly specific and elaborated view of human nature that appeals to common sense regarding hope and desire (in Greek, *elpis* and *erōs*). These emotional impulses are linked to typical reactions of the poor and the wealthy; thus Diodotus is arguing broadly that harsh punishments never stop similar behavior in the future. Punishment would, Diodotus argues, not only be unjust, but also foment further insurrections there and among other allies, a solution that serves both expediency and justice (Debnar 2000).

Both speakers in the Mytilenean debate, then, use human nature to support opposing views on how to treat unruly subjects. Both also show greater concern with what is expedient and useful, not what is humane, merciful, or just – foreshadowing the pragmatic focus of the Athenians at Melos. Points and rebuttals are based on very different readings of human nature, and specifically emotions: Cleon warns the Athenians about “giving in to the three failings most incompatible with empire: pity, enjoyment of speeches and evenhandedness” (Th. 3.39.3); Diodotus counters: “I consider the greatest obstacles to good counsel to be haste and anger [*orge*], the latter usually

involving folly, the other ignorance and deficiency of reasoning” (Th. 3.42.1). Throughout the debate, readers of the historian are called upon to follow and assess which side more accurately judges the emotional response of potential rebellious states, at present and in future, of the Athenian assembly, and of each speaker. Diodotus’ resolution not to execute all male Mytilenean citizens and enslave the women and children prevails, but just narrowly (Th. 3.49.1). Then, by a motion of Cleon, those who plotted the revolt are executed; the towns ruled by Mytilene become subjects of Athens (Th. 3.50). The Mytilenean episode and debate are afforded an extensive presentation (Th. 3.1–19 and 26–50) over a quarter of the length of Book 3. The section seems important as a barometer of Athenian imperial character rather than as a turning point in the course of the war itself. The presentation at one level reinforces the rational, evaluative process of the Athenians, to come to the most effective solution regarding the likely human responses (Dewald 2005: 95–6). Yet it also points out the fine margin by which the decision was reached, in effect reinforcing that the views of both speakers had equal support among the citizens. The Mytilenean outcome contrasts with the less rational responses of the Athenians to later events, including their ambition following success at Pylus (Th. 4.1–41, esp. 4.21.2 and 41.4, where the Athenians “grasped at more” and “were intent on greater gains”), their abandonment of nuanced considerations of justice in punishment of the Melians (Th. 5.84–114), and their stark desire (*erōs*) to mount the Sicilian expedition (Th. 6.24–6; esp. 24.3).

A final example of the interplay of reason and emotion in Thucydides is the historian’s own famous characterization of human nature in the narrative of Civil War in Corcyra, which one commentator has called “the most substantial expression of direct personal opinion in all Thucydides” (Hornblower 1991: 478):

With this savagery, the civil war progressed, and it seemed all the more savage because it was the first, while later the rest of Hellas, almost without exception, was also in turmoil, with rival efforts everywhere by the popular leaders to bring in the Athenians and the oligarchs, the Lacedaemonians ... And during the civil war the cities suffered many cruelties that occur and will always occur, so long as the nature of humans is the same, sometimes more terribly and sometimes less, varying in their forms as each change of fortune dictates. For, in peace and good circumstances, both states and individuals make better decisions [or “have better resolve”: *gnōmas*] through not falling into involuntary necessities; but war, stripping away the daily access to daily needs, is a violent teacher and brings most men’s emotions into line with the present situations.

(Th. 3.82.1–2, adapted)

The civil strife is called “savage” or “raw,” as if a bestial phenomenon in

opposition to normal civic interaction. Greece is said to be “in turmoil” (*ekinēthē*), words taken by many as an echo of the beginning of the *History*, when the whole war was said to be a “convulsion” (“movement”: *kinēsis*, Th. 1.1.2) for the Greeks. The “cruelties” of civil strife, a gloss on “savagery” earlier, occur with varying degrees of severity “so long as human nature is the same,” another way of saying “in accordance with human nature.” It is noteworthy that the historian seeks to find constants of motivation behind the variations of intense phenomena, in accordance with “the clear truth” behind phenomena, promised to readers in the methodology statement (Th. 1.23.4). In line with this nuanced observation, the last sentence of this passage goes further in distinguishing patterns of behavior common to states and individuals, in which peacetime allows “[ethically] better judgments” and war is a “violent teacher” that levels emotions to the immediately present conditions. The implied mechanics of human nature in this last statement are carefully modulated, by stating that in peace men are given to better decisions, more clearly reasoned, while in war decisions are led astray by emotions and immediate concerns. The analysis of *stasis* (“rebellion,” “civil war”) is not, of course, to be read as a rigid doctrine of “determinism,” whereby humans can never improve their behavior, but rather as a statement along the lines of our sociological or psychological generalizations, which aim to see what is typical in which situations. And yet such debased behavior is not unavoidable with the proper effort, resolve, and leadership. The passage implies an endorsement of clear reason and dedication to the common good by prizing better ethical behavior when possible and by disapproving of violence (Edmunds 1975b; Allison 1997b: 163–87). The phrase calling war a “violent teacher” (*biaios didaskalos*) can also be translated “teacher of violence,” both senses being valid. War instructs participants in violent behavior and uses violence as a means of instruction. In this case, war fosters civil violence and creates a civil chaos analogous to the lawlessness during the Plague (Th. 2.53).

The description of Civil War in Corcyra next continues with a celebrated description of the general turmoil, specifically the degeneration of words and values among the sides struggling in civil strife: “And in self-justification men inverted the usual evaluation of names for actions. Irrational recklessness was now considered courageous commitment” (Th. 3.82.3–4, adapted).

“Evaluation” (*axiōsis*) is a charged and crucial term, earlier glossed as a person’s “estimation” of how best to voice public views. This term more usually denotes “moral worthiness,” for example, of persons like Pericles (Th. 1.138.2; 2.34.6; 2.37.1; 2.61.4; 2.65.8; 6.54.3; Loraux 2009: 270–1). Hence individual dignity is transferred to *words*, ones that are chosen to assess the worth of individuals. Behind *axiōsis* as used here, one scholar has even detected a Thucydidean analysis of how humans formulate word choice in speaking (Allison 1997b: 163–86). There is, it seems, an initial evaluation of sense perceptions (*dokēsis*), followed by an evaluation of the subject (*dikaiōsis*), then finally an assessment of how best to formulate a public

expression (*axiōsis*). This analysis reflects more broadly some crucial Thucydidean concepts by which knowledge is achieved or correct opinions and strategies are best formulated. The “assessment” stage is based on social norms and expectations, and of course will crucially involve a speaker’s or writer’s view of how to tell it as he sees it (i.e., his “truth”) or how to skew the presentation to his advantage. Of course, at another level, Thucydides the historian himself makes an “evaluation,” his central duty to ensure that words accurately reflect deeds.

Alongside the interplay of emotion, reason, and human nature, the passage on civil strife implies certain ethical values guiding the historian’s assessment. In essence, the account of *stasis* reveals his support for traditional values, notably at the beginning of chapter 83: “In this way, every form of viciousness was established in the Hellenic world on account of the civil wars, and the simplicity that is especially found in noble natures disappeared because it became ridiculous” (Th. 3.83.1). The historian laments the loss of a simple good nature, a lack of guile that forms a counterpoint, according to some, at the ethical heart of the *History*: the earlier tradition of simplicity is in perpetual tension with a more recent pragmatic realism (Crane 1998; Hornblower 1987: 186–7 n100; Edmunds 1975b). The historian’s aim may be to reconcile the older elite ideals of self-sacrificing valor (*arete*) and devotion to the common good with new understandings of the workings of human nature.

In the opening of the *stasis* passage, material well-being is a factor motivating individuals and stimulating infighting, a factor that also in part defines the power of states in chapters 1–23 of Book 1 (which are sometimes called “Thucydides’ archaeology”; see Kallet-Marx 1993; Kallet 2001). Material conditions usually determine human motivation and actions. Only in exceptional situations of valor or desperation is wealth removed from the equation, for better or worse: see Pericles’ praise of both poor and wealthy soldiers facing death (Th. 2.42.4) and the historian’s account of lawless behavior by both the poor and the wealthy during the Great Plague in Athens (Th. 2.53.1).

There emerges from several passages a notable motif of Thucydidean thoughts on human nature, namely that there is one facet of it that he calls “character” (*tropoi*, literally “turnings, inclinations”) that can be linked to the culture of one’s city-state; the same word in the singular (*tropos*) means “way of acting” on a specific issue (Price 2001: 149 n47; Luginbill 1999, *passim*). This character is an aspect of “nature” that emerges from patterns of similar behavior and habits of a state’s culture and traditions. It seems that being aware of one’s character can lead to corrective changes in it to avoid its weaknesses, since the Corinthians seem to think they can persuade the Spartans to act out of character (Th. 1.70). The Corinthians contrast the ambitious and enterprising character of Athens with the slowness of Sparta,

and later the author comments that the Athenians and Syracusans are “similar in character” in their political management, size and strategy (Th. 7.55; Price 2001: 147–51). Thucydides seems to agree with the Corinthians’ assessment of the character of the two opponents: later in 411 BC, when Sparta missed the opportunity for possible victory over the whole “Athenian empire” (*archē*), he says:

But not on this occasion alone, yet on many others as well, the Lacedaemonians proved the most convenient of all people for the Athenians to be at war with. For as the farthest from them in character – the one people being quick, the other slow; the one enterprising, the other timid – they were obliging in general and particularly in the case of naval power.

(Th. 8.96, Price 2001: 148)

Pericles three times attributes the empire’s greatness to Athenian character (Th. 2.36, 39, 41). Nicias notes that the allied sailors admire and imitate the character of the Athenians (Th. 7.63). In advising against the ambitious Sicilian expedition, Nicias realizes that he is advising “against [Athenian] character” (Th. 6.9). After the enterprise has begun, Nicias again seems to try to change the Athenians’ character when he criticizes their “natures” (*phuseis*) in rejecting bad news (Th. 7.14). Character, then, is a collective aspect of human nature that shares aspects with individual behavior, but it is noteworthy in allowing the author to classify roughly generalized inclinations that historical agents take into their thinking.

“Human nature” in Thucydides is, in short, frequently associated with more appetitive, impulsive aspects of humans, desiring, fearing, and resorting to violence to dominate or servile behavior to submit. This is the severe image that emerges from most speakers and from the historian observing the relative rarity of more moral, just, or “noble” behavior, exemplified by the nearly extinct “noble simplicity” at 3.83. There is also the collective dimension of the character of certain city-states that to an extent reflects individual human behavior and becomes an important consideration in the assessment of decisions and actions by other persons and by the historian. But alongside the typical individual and group thinking are found important counterpoints of exceptional (if not perfect) virtue: intelligence, restraint and selfless generosity, manly courage (*arete*), and even a “power of nature” exemplified in different aspects by Pericles, Archidamus, Themistocles, Nicias, and others.

Themes and Significant Passages

The survey of the historian’s background and of the major themes above aims to serve as a guide for reading and formulating one’s own views of this

complex author. The best way to come to understand his thought is not, however, to isolate themes, but to read the work closely and sequentially, from beginning to end, and thereby to experience the horrible event from the author's perspective. It is a conflict that surpasses even the wars of Homer or Herodotus in scale, but also in suffering, as human behavior deteriorates (Th. 1.1, 23; Rawlings 1981; Connor 1984).

Book 1: The “Archaeology”

The first twenty-one chapters of Thucydides’ work, the so-called “archeology,” present clearly and programmatically a worldview based on a materialism similar to, if not directly inspired by, that of Democritus. The famous passage is overtly an attempt to evidence how the present war was the greatest in history: “This was certainly the greatest disturbance to affect the Hellenes and a considerable number of barbarians – one might even say the majority of mankind” (Th. 1.1); “And this war ... will clearly nevertheless stand out as greater than others for anyone who examines it from the facts themselves” (Th. 1.21). The whole section, indeed much of Book 1, is replete with ring composition, an archaic style found often in Homer and also in Herodotus whereby the stories that digress from the main narrative “circle back” to it in the end, in a sequence of thesis–proof–thesis, and within the concentric sections themselves there are frequently themes balanced with and echoing one another, for instance preparation (Th. 1.1. and 1.19), difficulty of judging from evidence (Th. 1.2 and 1.20), and islanders (Th. 1.4 and 1.8) (Hammond 1952; Connor 1984: 251–61).

Among the striking aspects of this section is “an anatomy of power based on a view of man’s nature” (Connor 1984: 26). Within the theme of the material basis of power we see states move toward territorial security, accumulation of capital, and military undertakings, particularly naval prowess toward the building of power. Another theme is the highlighting of human motives, notably fear and self-interest, in the interactions of states. Third, this section is a showpiece of method – how to do history in a fundamental way, reasoning from likelihood and analogy about known phenomena where oral traditions or visible remains are unreliable or where evidence is altogether missing. Thucydides cites evidence and signs (*tekmēria* or *sēmeia*). The substantive concerns and the kinds of evidence persist throughout the work, though the findings appear more secure since the evidence is more abundant and contemporary. But, throughout, the historian alludes to the dual motivation of humans, fear and greed (“love of profit”; Th. 1.8) in the period when Minos’ navy was in power. Agamemnon did not build allegiance by an oath to Tyndareus, but by surpassing others in power (Th. 1.9.1). Pelops acquired power in Southern Greece through the wealth he brought from Asia (Th. 1.9.2). He famously cautions against judging the power of a place from its size: Mycenae may seem small now, but,

if the city of the Lacedaemonians were deserted and the shrines and foundations of buildings preserved, I think that after the passage of considerable time there would eventually be widespread doubt that their power measured up to their reputation ... but if the Athenians were to suffer the same fate their power would be estimated, from the city’s pure

appearance, as twice what it is.

(Th. 1.10.1–2)

The complex comparison is aimed at assessing the power of Mycenae by viewing that of present Sparta against its hypothetical future ruins, present Athens against its future self, and the two states against each other – all serving the purpose of setting up the major powers in the current war and suggesting, by implication, that both are superior to a much earlier Mycenae. The second half of this section (Th. 1.13–19) discusses sequentially the rise of tyrants and the nature of their rule (Th. 1.13 and 17–18), the origin of trireme navies (Th. 1.14), the Persian navy in Ionia (Th. 1.16), and Sparta versus Athens in alliances conducted either through oligarchies or through the appropriation of others' navies (Th. 1.19). Obviously the digression is sharply honed to discuss the real bases of military might, which arises from capital resources and the extension of power by navies. It is also a model of sorting oral, literary, and material evidence by probability and human motives.

This leads to a consideration of the difficulty in ascertaining the truth of events in the present as well as in the distant past. Three crucial chapters discuss historical method, an excursus of a kind wholly alien to Herodotus: “men accept one another’s accounts of the past, even about their native countries, with a uniform lack of examination” (Th. 1.20). Thucydides directly questions the accounts of the past as recounted by poets and prose chroniclers (“logographers,” possibly including speech writers who allude to the past), especially since their truth claims cannot be verified and are distorted by patriotic fiction (Th. 1.21). The careful analysis of his own method has been discussed above, but we note how radically innovative it was for him to offer such a self-conscious evaluation as a paradigm of caution in writing history. The prize for such painstaking research is, he claims, the “plain truth,” which proves useful for analysis of future events (Romilly 2005; Grethlein 2004). The famous chapter on methodology (Th. 1.22) has been described above, in the discussions of speeches and the utility of the work for future: “a possession for all time,” as the historian describes his work.

The coda to the proem is the chapter on the causes of the war (Th. 1.23), which circles back to the first chapter (Th. 1.1) and pointedly deflates the greatness of the Persian Wars (“a quick resolution in two battles on sea and two on land”), but also underlines the unprecedented greatness of suffering in the present war (cities desolated, men exiled and slaughtered). The chapter ends with a summary of the motives expounded later in Book 1, namely that the war was caused by both sides breaking the Thirty Years Truce, and that the “truest cause [is] the one least openly expressed, that increasing Athenian greatness and the resulting fear among the Lacedaemonians made going to war inevitable” (Th. 1.23). The analysis reveals the fundamental human motivations of acquisitiveness and fear.

The first narrative relates the incidents at Corcyra and Potidaea, where Athenian intervention caused an immediate backlash among the Peloponnesians (Th. 1.24–65). When pro-Spartan Corinth fell into conflict with its former colony Corcyra in northwest Greece, both came to Athens in 433 BC to ask respectively that the Athenians remain neutral or come to Corcyra's aid (1.32–43). Corcyra has conceived a "hatred" of Corinth due to envy of the latter's being wealthier in resources and more powerful in its army and navy, all terms relating exactly to the "archaeology" and rooted in emotion (Kallet-Marx 1993: 71–2). Corcyra appeals to expediency and Corinth more to justice, but one has the sense that justice is less at issue and the "amorality of interstate relations" constitutes the "background against which Thucydides' emotional and principled attitudes stand out" (Crane 1998: 108; see also Morrison 2006b: 25–43). Athens, out of its own interest in keeping open the route to Italy and Sicily, gave limited assistance to Corcyra (Th. 1.44). An engagement of navies at Sybota is inconclusive – both sides set up trophies (Th. 1.52–4).

After Corinth encourages a revolt around Potidaea, which results in a siege of the city by the Athenian navy (Th. 1.56–65), Sparta, in 432 BC, calls an assembly of those who suffered from Athenian aggression (Th. 1.66–7). Two pairs of speeches (a "tetralogy") illustrate the key issues from the perspectives of the Corinthians, the Athenians, the Spartan king Archidamus, and a Spartan ephor, Sthenelaïdas (Th. 1.66–87). The Corinthians frame the inevitability of the conflict as a clash of city-state character, Athenian impulsive aggression and Spartan hesitation (Th. 1.70). They seek to frighten Sparta to wage war, while the Athenians urge restraint from war as the command of the league is deserved and humanly justifiable as an opportunity any city would take. The Athenians' famous formulation of the "law" of empire, discussed above, is enunciated here, stealthily conveying their great might in arguments claiming justification (Th. 1.76). Archidamus advises restraint, building resources and following the Spartan virtue of moderation, as epitomized by the following:

Through our orderliness we are rendered both warlike and wise; the former, because a sense of respect is the greater part of moderation, and courage is the greatest part of respect; and wise because we are educated with too little learning to despise the laws and too sensibly, though our strictness, to disobey them.

(Th. 1.84)

Sthenelaïdas appeals rather to the bellicose side of the Spartan spirit and its disdain for complex rhetoric; an emotional appeal to avenge the Spartans' allies is his primary argument, blindly ignoring the problems of resources and allied support (Th. 1.86). The crucial tetralogy lays out motivations on all sides. Corinth describes the dilemma of a "hot" aggressor and a "cold" opponent; Athens justifies its claim to power on the basis of just actions in the

past (against Persia) and human nature. And Sparta performs its problematic identity, illustrating how, despite the measured advice of the king, the emotions of the polemical hothead win out. The vote was taken with public claims that Athens broke the treaty, but with the truer cause of Spartan fear of Athenian power (Th. 1.88, echoing 1.22) (Crane 1998: 196–236; Immerwahr 1973; Raubitschek 1973).

This momentous event is marked off by the “ring composition” of narratives related to the building of empire and interstate tensions, which begin and end with stories related to Themistocles and Pausanias, namely (1) Themistocles’ stealthy scheme to fortify Athens and the Spartan Pausanias’ missteps in being overbearing to other Greeks, which led to the Greeks’ request that Athens lead the Delian League (87–97); and (2) the dramatic and ironic endings for those two great leaders (Th. 1.128–38). In between these is positioned a lengthy digression, the “fifty years” (*pentēkontaetia*), which “flashes back” to the period between the end of the Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian War (Th. 1.97–118), an era of tremendous Athenian aggression, summarized at the end:

In this period the Athenians both made control over their empire [*archē*] more secure and made great advances in their power [*dunamis*] ... [the Spartans] did not oppose it except in limited ways and remained inactive most of the time, slow as in the past to go to war.

(Th. 1.118)

The digression details in rapid succession the events by which the Athenians secured allies, punished those who tried to withdraw from the league (punishments in violation of the agreement), fought the Spartans and their allies, and eventually agreed to a thirty-year peace in 446 BC (1.115). The unstable “peace” was the background for the tensions at the time when the formal present war was declared.

At a conference in Sparta in 432 BC, the Corinthians urge Sparta and its allies to go to war against Athens and sketch optimistic plans for finances and strategies for the campaigns (Th. 1.119–24). The Corinthians offer a specious argument: “The power of the Athenians is more purchased than homegrown, but ours would be less vulnerable there because of being based on manpower instead of money” (Th. 1.121). Yes, Athenian might relies on the expenses of building and maintaining ships and, where needed, hiring non-native sailors (Kallet-Marx 1993: 89–91), but the Peloponnesians’ claim of being “homegrown” is answered by Pericles’ speech (Th. 1.143).

The Peloponnesian allies vote to declare war, but a year intervenes in which preparations are made and embassies are sent. There follow the concluding ring stories of Pausanias and Themistocles, a section highly reminiscent of Herodotean storytelling, not least for its focus on the personally tragic stories of leaders. The digression is preceded by describing how each side asks the

other to drive out a sacred curse of the past, one involving the death of the Athenian Cylon on the Athenian acropolis (Th. 1.126), the other about the Spartan Pausanias in a Spartan sanctuary. The narrative flows to the story of Pausanias and his suspected treachery (Th. 1.128–34), then to the Athenian Themistocles and his similar ties to Persia, ending with the latter’s refuge at the court of Xerxes (Th. 1.135–8). The greater “ring” involves the ethnicity of the leaders (Athenian–Spartan–Athenian) and seems deliberately to lead to the first major appearance of the Athenian general Pericles, whose intelligence is comparable to that of Themistocles (1.139–45). Pericles’ speech lays out his initial strategy of heavier reliance on naval power, and in essence is a response at a distance to the Corinthian speech just before (Connor 1984: 49–50). He also invokes the martial spirit of the Persian Wars to underscore his confidence in the present power of Athens, though this ironically contrasts with the less noble conflict among fellow Greeks:

Remember that it was our fathers, standing against the Medes ... more by policies than by fortune, with greater daring than might [*dunamis*], who drove out the barbarian and advanced our power to its present level (Th. 1.144).

Book 1 has arguably the most complex structure in the *History*, and close analysis is required to trace the principles of the author’s method and criteria: prehistory and the growth of resources and power, the care taken in establishing factual content, the proximate conflicts triggering the war, conferences and debates before the decision to act, and lengthy exegesis of the fifty years that bridge the Persian War with this one. In effect this book is equivalent to the “preliminaries” and causal chain presented by Herodotus in his Books 1 to 5.

Book 2

The famous narrative of the first two years of the war (431–429 BC) in Book 2 presents the beginning and end of the generalships of Archidamus (Th. 2.10–21, 71–5; 3.1) and Pericles (Th. 2.7–65), ending, in a sense, the acme of both city-states before the decline presented in later books. The highpoints of this section, in style and thematic content, are in the center: the funeral oration of Pericles, the Plague at Athens, and Pericles' third speech. Vivid battle narratives occupy the beginning and the end, with a Theban attack of Plataea (Th. 2.1–6), a series of reports of events in Persia, Argos, the Gulf of Krisa and Potidaia (Th. 2.66–70), a later Peloponnesian siege to take Plataea (Th. 2.71–8), a naval encounter between Peloponnesian and Athenian forces in Western Greece culminating in an Athenian victory at Naupactus (Th. 2.80–92, 102–3), an aborted attempt to take the Piraeus (Th. 2.93–4), and fighting on the “fringe” between Macedonia and Thrace (Th. 2.95–101). Even the descriptions of strategy, exhortations, and decisions in battle reveal aspects of effective and inferior thinking by leaders (Stahl 2003: 75–101; Watts-Tobin 2000).

The Theban attack offers a set piece on human weaknesses, including the traitorous ambition of a pro-oligarchic Plataean who secretly lets the Thebans in the gates for the sake of his own personal power (*dunamis*: Th. 2.2) and the intense emotionality of the besieged (fear: Th. 2.3; disorder: Th. 2.4). When 180 Plataeans are executed, we are presented with a situation, repeated often in the work, of discrepancy between plan and execution, chance and strategy, deception and miscalculation. It is a striking rupture of peace, marked by the brutality and inexperience of combatants. It also foreshadows a greater episode in the Theban–Plataean conflict (3.52–68).

After a statement summarizing Peloponnesian enthusiasm for seeking the “liberation of Hellas” from Athens, Archidamus gathers allies at the Isthmus and exhorts a strategy of burning fields to provoke anger and mistakes in Athens: “For everything is uncertain in war and attacks usually come at short notice, out of passion [*orge*] ... For anger [*orge*] comes over me on seeing all of a sudden, before their eyes, that they are suffering something unaccustomed, and those who least employ calculation are driven into action by passion” (Th. 2.11); later this is called Archidamus' “plan” (*gnōmē*) (Th. 2.20). Pericles' counterplan is for those in the countryside to abandon their homes and crowd inside the city walls, and to remain optimistic in view of the revenue from allies (Th. 2.13). The people comply, and are first disconsolate, then angry at Pericles (Th. 2.16, 21). He is confident in his plan but prudently avoids calling an assembly “lest they make mistakes by coming together in a passionate [state] [*orge*] rather than in reasonable state (*gnōmē*)” (Th. 2.22, adapted). Human emotion is a strategic pawn of both leaders. After a series of

Athenian naval raids, the end of the first years of the conflict is marked by burial of the dead and Pericles' funeral oration (Th. 2.35–46).

This monumental speech, compared by some in its magnificence to the sculptural frieze of citizens on the Parthenon, serves many functions that resonate with themes of the historian, including the vision of the leader, the strengths of the city, a commentary on the achievement of the fallen, a challenge to the survivors, and a counterpoint to the next section, on the Plague (Parthenon parallel: Hornblower 1991: 295, 312). The oration is prefaced by a remark about the difficulty of giving such addresses and praise of the ancestors, after which a core of pure praise comes in three parts: praise of the ethos of the state (ch. 37), appreciation of Athenian lifestyle and culture (chs. 38–9), and description of aspects of character (*tropoi*) that gave rise to the Athenians' power (chs. 40–1). Finally come the sections praising the dead (ch. 42), exhorting fellow citizens (ch. 43), comforting the parents (ch. 44), and challenging the brothers and children of the fallen (ch. 45); and a summarizing farewell (ch. 46). We ultimately cannot say whether this speech is typical of the genre of similar addresses, nor the extent to which it reflects actual Periclean rhetoric or that of Thucydides, though it is likely a blend of both, especially for such a public event, at which many contemporary witnesses were present. In any case, the speech captures the spirit of Athens at its acme, as the historian deemed it worthy of presentation. One motif of the speech is the liberal spirit of the democracy, by which men are not compelled to act: service is given according to merit, military training is done in a more relaxed manner, and beauty is appreciated with economy in daily life (Th. 2.37–40). All of these qualities are in implicit contrast to Sparta and its more compulsory systems of education, training, and service, a contrast therefore carrying on the polarity established in Book 1; for example the mention of things “not hidden” (*mē kruphthen*) in Athens alludes to the more secretive system of Sparta and its “secret service” (*krupteia*). But later events and the present context require readers not to accept the Periclean ideal as the whole truth, again like the Parthenon sculptures, but to see the extended treatment here as one politician's image in a stream of grimmer realities.

Continuing the power theme from Book 1, the winning of empire and the fame of this acme of achievement also resonate through the piece: “[our fathers] acquired through great effort the whole of the empire we now rule and left it to us in the present generation” (Th. 2.36). We noted above the passage in which Athens is called “the education of Hellas” to which the very “power” (*dunamis*) of the city attests, a power by which “we have compelled every sea and land to become open to our daring” (Th. 2.41). Surviving citizens are asked to emulate the dead by “wondering at the city's power as you actually see it each day and becoming her lovers, reflecting wherever her fame appears great to you that young men ... [thought it right] to offer [their virtue] to [the city] as their finest contribution” (Th. 2.43). Sexual desire (*erōs*) is

appropriated as an apt metaphor for the relation of potential warriors who need to yearn for the city while being in awe of its might (Monoson 1994). A soldier needing to muster emotional motivation to meet the enemy is similar to the athlete working himself up before the contest, and the speech exploits that imagery too, concluding with mention that the state will “confer on both the dead and their survivors a beneficial crown for such contests as these. And now ... depart” (Th. 2.46) (Hornblower 1991: 315). The word for “depart” is exactly what the starter says to the runners in Greek footraces, thus here implying that the survivors must “run to the goal,” emboldened to meet the challenges (Mikrogiannakis 2004).

Next comes the brilliant narrative on the great Plague at Athens (430 BC) that arose from the crowding in the city. It deliberately presents a sharp contrast to Periclean idealism. One seemingly ironic echo of the funeral oration is the phrase “self-sufficient individual” (*sōma autarkes*) that occurs in both, asserting the self-sufficiency of the Athenian individual and city in the Periclean speech (Th. 2.36 and 41) but flatly stating that in the plague “no individual was shown to be self-sufficient” against it (Th. 2.53; see Scanlon 1994: 145–56; Allison 1983). The allusion serves as a warning about the force of chance against the best calculation, but it need not negate the degree of self-sufficiency achieved earlier in Athens. The plague narrative encourages readers to contemplate the unpredictability of chance and to observe, as in a test case, how individuals react differently to the most challenging circumstances (Th. 2.47–54). It is also a showcase for Thucydides’ quasi-Hippocratic method at its most overtly objective, as he reports while withholding judgment: “Now, let each man, doctor or layman, speak about it according to his understanding, what its origin is likely to have been and [what its causes]” (Th. 2.48).

As in his earlier statement on method (Th. 1.22), the utility here is to reveal circumstances clearly, not to suggest simple solutions (Allison 1997b: 65–71; Parry 1969: 108). Though there may be Homeric resonances of the dogs and humans dying during the plague in *Iliad* 1, the style of the early chapters is technical, reviewing possible origins and listing the epidemic’s horrid symptoms and progress (Th. 2.47–50; Hornblower 1991: 316–18; Mittelstadt 1968; Mitchell-Boyask 2008). Interestingly, recent excavations have unearthed a mass grave of 90–150 victims of this episode, a somber modern confirmation of the historian’s report (Axarlis 1998).

Thucydides notes the selfless generosity of a minority taking care of the sick, but observes at greater length the self-seeking and lawless behavior during the plague, including the mass burials violating funeral customs, as well as the lawless pleasure seeking of people faced with imminent death (Th. 2.51–3). The episode is a model of the author’s view of raw human nature and the chaos that ensues when impulses dictate all and “laws and customs [*nomoi*] are ignored” (Nielsen 1996). It is also a critique of conventional religion,

namely of people's self-serving reading of oracles (Th. 2.54; Marinatos 1981). The passage has been rightly compared with a later one on the inversion of values during civil strife at Corcyra: "Whatever was pleasant immediately and whatever was conducive to that were deemed both noble and useful. Neither fear of the gods nor law of man was a deterrent" (Th. 2.53; cf. 3.82).

The second year of the war (430 BC) is marked by the continued invasion of Attica and by the presence of the plague in the city, which gives rise to popular blaming of Pericles and desire to make peace (Th. 2.59). Pericles' intelligence senses the solution: "Seeing them incensed at the situation and in every way acting just as he had expected, he called an assembly" when he gave his third (and final) extended speech in the work (Th. 2.60–4). The speech is forceful and blunt and does not plead or pander to the people. It is the historian's final occasion to characterize this leader in action and to display his control of the people. Pericles deflects the Athenians' impulsive anger (*orge*) by taking the offensive, explaining how he is a leader second to none in the four main skills: "judging what is necessary and explaining it; furthermore a lover of my country and above money" (Th. 2.60). There is a risk of being too formulaic in sketching an ideal leader, but this model is repeated by Thucydides directly (Th. 2.65) and it seems to encapsulate the qualities by which others are seen to fall short (e.g., Themistocles and Alcibiades seem to lack the love of their city). He contrasts his steadfastness with the people's weakened resolve: "For that which is sudden and unexpected and which comes with the least accountability is that which enslaves the spirit: this has happened to you, especially ... on account of the plague" (Th. 2.61). He then shifts to the reason for confidence, namely the power of the city, pointing out especially the Athenians' naval superiority (Th. 2.62), which is consistent with his earlier strategy of relying on sea power (Th. 1.142; 2.22). Athenians cannot abdicate their "rule" ("empire": *arche*), he adds, without becoming enslaved to others, "for you now hold [the rule] like a tyranny that seems unjust to acquire but dangerous to let go" (Th. 2.63). The tyrant-state motif, invoked later by Cleon (Th. 3.37), is another bald statement that maintaining power is a natural necessity – a highly precarious position, and one that invokes an emotional response by those ruled. The eternal fame of Athenian rule is in itself a motivation to endure present hardships:

Know that Athens has the greatest renown among all humans because of not yielding to misfortune ... and has certainly acquired the greatest power [*dunamis*] known up to this time, for which it will be forever remembered by posterity, even if in the present we give way somewhere (for it is in the nature of all things to be diminished too), that we as Hellenes ruled over most Hellenes ... and lived in a city that was in all ways best provided for and greatest.

(Th. 2.64)

This philosophical perspective may seem like a prediction of the fall of Athens interjected by Thucydides, but it may well be an accurate reflection of a typically Periclean stress on the fame of the city – a stress based on its power and wealth, as in the funeral oration (Th. 2.41.2 and 43.1).

Pericles died in 429 BC, a year after this speech, but his obituary and accomplishments are summarized here to allow for a transition to the battle narratives. The prominence given to the power of Athens and the final assessment of Pericles immediately following this speech may imply the historian's approval of the Periclean control of the people and image of the state (Th. 2.65). The passage is one of the few extended and explicit statements of the historian's political views. Before the war, Athens "became greatest in his hands, and when war broke out it was clear that he foresaw the power it had at this time" (Th. 2.65). Even if we fault Thucydides' judgment that Pericles' successors actually differed much from him in their manner of rule (Hornblower 1997: 340), it remains Thucydides' view that Pericles was different, and particularly in his ability to control the people:

He exercised free control over the people and was not led by them instead of leading them, because he did not speak to please in order to acquire power [*dunamis*] by improper means but, since he had this through his prestige, even contradicted them in their anger ... And what was in name a democracy became in actuality rule by one man.

(Th. 2.65)

Pericles' successors "handed over control to the people's pleasure" and "made many mistakes, especially the expedition to Sicily," because of politically motivated decisions, which eventually brought about the city's downfall (Th. 2.65). Power and its able use, then, are for Thucydides the primary measures of a successful leader and city. The passage clearly absolves Pericles of fault for the ultimate defeat; and, historically accurate or not, this view recalls the thematic emphasis on a leader's intelligence and skill in responding to human impulses. This section also demonstrates how understanding human thinking is an essential aspect of maintaining imperial power.

The narratives of the series of campaigns that fill out the rest of Book 2 (Th. 2.66–103; mostly on 429 BC) show Athens without a clear strategy and essentially leaderless, capped by sheer panic ("as great as any during this war") when the Athenians think that the enemy has sailed right into Piraeus (Th. 2.94; Connor 1984: 75–8). All the action in these sections produces no significant gains for either side.

Book 3

Athens and Sparta are now missing their great leaders. Archidamus is last mentioned at 3.1, oddly with no “obituary” like that of Pericles, which indicates the more crucial role of Pericles in Thucydides’ model of leadership and imperial spirit. Three episodes stand out in this book, stylistically and thematically, namely the Athenian siege of and debate on Mytilene (Th. 3.8–18; 25–36; 37–50), the Peloponnesian siege of and the speeches concerning Plataea (Th. 3.20–4; 52–68), and civil strife (*stasis*) on Corcyra (Th. 3.69–85). The Mytilenean debate was mentioned above, in discussions of how justice is balanced with pragmatic aims in both speeches, how Cleon points up sophistic rhetoric, and how Diodotus outlines human nature and its irrational reliance on hope and desire. We might add that Cleon’s argument also hinges on an assessment of the Mytilenean emotion and power: a condition of undue boldness, hope for greater power, and choice of “might over right” (Th. 3.39). He also discourages showing pity or clemency for human error in this case (Th. 3.40).

Corcyrean *stasis* was examined earlier for the historian’s own views of human nature and the manipulation of meaning during war. The antithetical speeches of the Plataeans and Thebans before the Spartans at Plataea appeal to right and wrong in elaborate argumentation, including the invocation of the actions of each in the Persian Wars, but in the end Sparta does not spare the Plataeans, the historian reveals, for pragmatic reasons related to the usefulness of Thebes as an ally (Connor 1984: 91–5). The Plataean debate should be considered against the Mytilenean one, illustrating how military advantage is the decisive “bottom-line” factor in deliberation during war. As in the Corcyrean narrative, human nature trumps traditional ethical considerations. But the reader is left uncertain whether this is a discourse in political realism, a lament for the loss of higher values, or a nonjudgmental outline of the interplay of both.

The final chapters (Th. 3.89–116), as in Book 2, shift to a series of busy campaigns, all in 426 BC (Sicily, Aeolian Islands, Attica, the Peloponnese, Trachis, Leucas, Aetolia, Delos and Acarnania). Most notable of these “lesser” episodes is the account of the Athenians’ purification of Delos, which, W. R. Connor points out, is “a little island of calm equipoised amid the expanding and intensifying war,” in which the archaic poem *The Hymn to Apollo* is quoted directly and, exceptionally, at some length. The lines relate a peaceful festival with dance, song, and games. Connor also suggests that this episode is a counterpoint to the “perverted festival” described as part of the strife in Corcyra (Connor 1984: 105–7). The surrounding war includes the defeat of the Athenian Demosthenes in Aetolia, then his victory at Ambracia (Th. 3.95–8 and 105–14), both quasi-primitive foes who favor guerrilla

techniques, hence a further regression to savagery in the war. The contrast of a peaceful festival with brutal war is also reminiscent of Homer's contrasting scenes of the city at peace and at war in a circle on the shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.490–540): perhaps not a direct inspiration, but a parallel to how the contrast can be effective.

Book 4

Covering years seven to nine of the war (summer 425 BC to summer 423 BC), this section “bookends” two major campaigns: the Athenian occupation of Pylos in the Peloponnese, led by Demosthenes and Cleon (Th. 4.2–41); and the Spartan campaigning of Brasidas in Thrace and Chalcidice (Th. 4.70–132). Thematically, in each campaign the negligence of the opponent is taken advantage of to build stunning successes. The losers on each side display fear: the Spartans after Pylos (Th. 4.41 and 55), the Athenians after losses in Chalcidice (Th. 4.108, 117; Hornblower 1996). The Pylos episode becomes emblematic of Athenian reliance on an almost fated good fortune, which comes back to haunt them when they hybrisically reject overtures of peace from the Peloponnesians and continue “grasping for more” (Th. 4.15–22; for the “grasping” theme, see Th. 4.17, 22, 41, and 92; Connor 1984: 119–21; Romilly 1963: 172–9; Hunter 1973: 61–83). The episode also reminds readers of the innovative and ambitious character of the Athenians. Cleon personifies this aggressiveness, clashing with Nicias in the assembly and making a “mad” promise to resolve the Pylos standoff in twenty days, even though he makes good on it in the end (Th. 4.27–8, 39). The negative characterization of the Athenian general is probably rooted in the historian’s broad bias against Cleon (Hornblower 1987: 165–7).

Between the two major war narratives comes the important speech of Hermocrates the Syracusan at a conference at Gela, Sicily, considered to illustrate how it is human nature to resist oppressive power (Th. 4.58–65; 424 BC). The speech broadly discusses the greed and ambition of Athenians and the need for unity against them. It foregrounds the principle by which the Sicilians act and achieve victory in Books 6 and 7.

Brasidas’ victories in Chalcidice display the first real military blow to Athens, evening the balance sheets and prefacing an interval of peace. Brasidas was able to rekindle the antipathy to Athens that existed at the start of the war (Th. 2.8) but had since waned. He did this by approaching city after city in the north of Greece, in eloquent speeches, promising them freedom against a tyrant state, in terms that recall the Persian threat of that great conflict. He proclaims to the people of Akanthus:

And again, we do not desire empire, but since we are eager to end it for others, we would wrong all the rest if in offering universal independence we overlooked your opposition ... decide wisely and strive to be the first in beginning the liberation of Hellas ...

(Th. 4.87)

Brasidas’ greatest prize in this campaign was Amphipolis, a crucial city on the trade route from Northern Greece and the Hellespont, a center for timber and

minerals, and an emblem of Athenian imperialism, founded as Athens' colony fifteen years earlier, in 437 BC. The campaign of Brasidas (Th. 4.102–8) involved treachery, diplomacy, and a show of force to win the citizens over. It succeeded despite the best efforts of Thucydides, self-characterized as “general” only here, as mentioned above (Th. 4.104–6). The conflation of actor and narrator is remarkably restrained, without any undue self-justification and without the amplified detail he could well have furnished. The restraint serves Thucydides' credibility well, being in line with his concern for brevity and a focus on “truth” and causation (notably at 1.20–3).

The effect of the capture is expressed in terms of fallible human reactions:

Athenians were in a state of great alarm ... the cities subject to Athens ... were strongly motivated to revolutionary action ... it was obvious to them that they could do so with impunity, a mistake about Athenian power [*dunamis*] as great as the obviousness of that power later on, but their decisions were based more on vague wishes than on secure foresight, following the human habit of entrusting desires to heedless hopes, while using arbitrary reasoning to dismiss what is unacceptable.

(Th. 4.108)

The analysis here resembles reflections on the deceptiveness of hope by Diodotus or by the Athenians at Melos (Th. 3.45; 5.103; Hornblower 1996: 344). The author warns about limited achievements magnified by public opinion versus the reality of military power, but he also warns how hopes led by propaganda can have a very real effect on alliances.

The striking inclusion of several documents or inscriptions of treaties quoted verbatim (or nearly so) in Books 4 and 5 raise questions about the reason for their presence in an otherwise concise author. The Athens–Sparta truce at 4.16 and armistice at 4.118–19 seem to reflect the Pylos–Chalcidice parallelism. The treaty at 5.18–19 and alliance at 5.23–4 are important in documenting the Peace of Nicias. An Argive–Spartan alliance in Dorian dialect (Th. 5.77, 79) and a quadruple alliance of Athens (Th. 5.47, corresponding closely to a preserved inscription), along with the others mentioned, may indicate the historian's innovation in including exact documents, not so much to impress as to adhere to his self-proclaimed desire for accuracy (Hornblower 1996: 112–19). Some have argued that these are overly detailed data that would have been revised in a later draft. In the end, the intriguing documents elude any certain explanation.

Book 5

The traditional bounds of Book 4 are awkward, and many would reasonably link to Book 4 the section 5.1–24 as part of the prior narrative, since it rounds off the episodes with Brasidas and brings the first ten years of conflict (the Archidamian War) to an end. This section is followed by a “second preface” (Th. 5.26) and the account of the uneasy peace in 421 BC until hostilities resumed in 415 BC; this account covers years eleven to sixteen of the war (Th. 5.26–116) and is highlighted by the Melian dialogue (Th. 5.84–114).

The death of two major protagonists in the battle of Eion (Th. 5.10) opens the way for the Peace of Nicias (Th. 5.15–17). The historian summarizes the effect of the death of the two in the conflict,

Cleon and Brasidas, certainly the main opponents of peace on each side – one of them because of the success and honor derived from the war, the other because he thought that in calmer times he would be recognized as a rogue and his slanders lack credibility.

(Th. 5.16)

In their final confrontation, Thucydides appreciates the words and action of Brasidas (Th. 5.9–10), which reflect his “courage and intelligence” noted in the introduction (Th. 4.81). Cleon tried to flee the fight and was killed ingloriously by a light-armed warrior (Th. 5.10), in line with the generally unfavorable characterization of this man by Thucydides.

Thucydides sees the motives for peace in terms of failed expectations of swifter victory on both sides (Th. 5.14), that is, as indications of unreasonable hopes and unclear analysis. Furthermore, it is the *personal* motives of the Spartan king Pleistoanax and of the Athenian Nicias for making peace that are instrumental to their peace making: Nicias wanted to preserve his good fortune by never bringing disaster to the state, and the king had achieved return from exile and sought to bolster himself against his enemies (Th. 5.16). The description of Nicias is wholly ironic in view of his role in the Athenian defeat in Sicily and his loss of good fortune. In sum, the character of these two men enables a turnabout from the situation engineered by the character of the two men who died at Eion, and we can see that the tide of Athenian power changed because of a shift in leadership, which passed on to men with different personal motivations. The course of war is, as often for the author, determined by individual human qualities.

The Peace of Nicias was stipulated to last for fifty years and was agreed to restore the *status quo ante*, in other words to return all territories gained in the war; this process included Athens’ giving of Pylos and of the Spartan prisoners from it back to Sparta, and Sparta’s relinquishing of all Northern territories gained by Brasidas (Th. 5.18).

Within this section of “peace” two narrative “picture units” stand out, one drawing attention to the author’s reasons for considering the subject a single twenty-seven-year war (Th. 5.26) and a second narrating the Spartan–Elean tensions at the Olympics of 420 BC (Dewald 2005: 128–9). The “second preface” (Th. 5.26), naming the author again, follows the formal note that the two sides “stopped short of invading one another” during the six years and ten months of the peace, but continued to harm each other as much as possible without violating the truce (Th. 5.25). The argument for the continuity of the war across the peace then alludes to “wrongs on both sides” that are more fully documented in the rest of Book 5. The Olympics narrative stands out in clarity, suggesting that Thucydides may have been present, but its inclusion is justified by a vivid example of the real tension among the Greek states just after a fourfold alliance of Athens, Elis, Mantinea, and Argos is formed (Th. 5.42–8). As Dewald notes, the participants at the Olympic Games are on the brink of war, and we, like the spectators, draw our breath in suspense.

On the whole, either the narrative of an uneasy peace demanded an entirely different narrative mode, seen in 5.26–83, or the author left the text in a choppy form that was to be revised later; we will see that the same issues exist in Book 8, which has caused critics to suggest similar explanations there. If what we have of Book 5 was the final form, it conveys a strange, tense, and fast-paced atmosphere of political maneuvering in which events could at any time lead to a major eruption of hostilities (Dewald 2005: 142–3). Instead of pointing up isolated episodes of battle, which receive very brief treatment, Thucydides goes more deeply into alliances, treaties, and the Spartan recovery of prestige. The disconnectedness of episodes does not allow a consistent narrative thread, yet the author dutifully records the dead ends and the lesser outcomes as the honest events of his year-by-year format.

The Melian Dialogue, 5.84–116

Coming after the shifting and terse run of episodes earlier in the book, the Melian narrative is an explosion of connected, powerful rhetoric, a quintessential exercise in reporting the discourse of hegemony and the frailness of human hopes against *Realpolitik*. The dialogue form is itself a notable innovation by Thucydides, in the extent and manner used here (cf. Th. 3.113). The narrative seems to shift sharply from the events on land that figure largely earlier in this book to a naval issue of the Cycladic island’s reluctance to become an Athenian ally, and from diplomacy to great issues of imperialism (Hornblower 2008: 216–25). The passage echoes the power politics of Books 1–4 and presages the naval aggression of Athens in the Sicilian expedition of Books 6 and 7.

Scholars have taken sides regarding whether the juxtaposition of merciless

power politics in the dialogue next to the ambitious expedition implicitly signals the author's condemnation of the "might over right" philosophy. It is very tempting to say that it does, but some have noted that the author gives no clear expression of pathos, as he does in the case of the slaughter of children in Mycalessus, and that "the Melians had the opportunity to prevent the fate they had done something to provoke" (Th. 7.30; see also Dover 1970: 410). Thucydides is too fine a stylist and thinker to deliver moralistic judgments instead of portraying events almost as an intellectual and ethical puzzle that begs for the thought and analysis of the reader, even if he has a personal opinion or conviction. While the dialogue proper focuses on whether Melos should surrender and not on the Melians' punishment for not doing so, a thoughtful reader might well consider how the behavior of the mightier reinforces their "tyrannical" character, recalling the Athenians' characterization of their own rule as a "tyranny" (Th. 2.63; 3.37). The importance of issues of power and human nature in this dialogue were noted above, in quoting chapters 89 and 105 of Book 5 – respectively on the Athenians' unwillingness to include questions of justice in a situation where power is unequal and on their invocation of the rule of the stronger. The Athenians here extend the axiom of the powerful ruling where they can to the gods themselves (Th. 5.105). These are restatements of the Athenian rule of the stronger at 1.76. But readers might well also consider how the merciless attitude of the present passage contrasts with the ultimate sparing of the Mytileneans in Book 3, albeit still in the context of Athens' absolutely pragmatic reasoning. The Athenians belittle unfounded hopes (Th. 5.103), recalling Diodotus' cautions about unreasonable hope and desire leading the weaker on, despite all threats (Th. 3.45). The piece is, in any case, unquestionably rooted in a vocabulary of power and human nature that the author has fashioned and led us to use.

As has been observed, the core issues of the dialogue proceed from the discussion of the Athenians (how sparing Melos might be in their interests: Th. 89–101), to that of the gods, hope, and the Spartans (how these each might save them: Th. 102–11; see Hornblower 2008: 220–5). Sparta's relationship is one of a metropolis, founding mother city, hence a colonial relationship – a politically reasonable point, and one in line with the kinship and colony themes of the work; but the metropolis does not save the Melians. The killing of all adult men and the enslavement of women and children are reported succinctly and without comment, right before the beginning of the narration of the Sicilian expedition (Th. 5.116).

Book 6

Books 6 and 7, virtually all on the Sicilian campaign, constitute the greatest single unified narrative of the work. They also differ sharply in style and unity from the adjacent, more episodic Books 5 and 8. Is their unity given by the single great event, or is it a result of greater refinement than received by the other books, which were to be reworked later? Cogent arguments have been made for both explanations and, in the absence of any definitive proof either way, readers might better focus on the considerably fine literary qualities of the history as we have it.

An ominous comment on the Athenians' gross miscalculation of the magnitude of the Sicilian undertaking opens the book (Th. 6.1), followed by an ethno-geographical digression on Sicily (Th. 6.2–5). The latter functions like the “archaeology” chapters prefacing Book 1, beginning with crucial facts that will lead to an elaboration on familiar themes, namely overzealous imperialism and strategies misdirected by emotion on the part of Athens, and intelligent and innovative response by the main opponent, Syracuse. The digression is summarized through an allusion to 1.23 on how a truest cause underlies the given pretexts: “against a place of this size the Athenians were bent on campaigning, their eagerness for complete conquest the truest cause but with a reasonable pretext as well in wanting to help their kinsmen and allies they had acquired” (Th. 6.6). The digression highlights colonization of the island in the past, which resonates with Athens' present colonizing efforts and with the Corinth–Syracuse colonial allegiance (Hornblower 2008: 262–3).

Overtly, the Athenians vote for the expedition because the Egestans have asked for their aid against the rival city of Selinus (Th. 6.6), though even the city of Egesta tricks the Athenians with a show of borrowed gold and silver and a promise of more financial help than it can afford (Th. 6.46). In fact the vote is represented as arising out of a desire for greater imperial power, personal wealth, and glory. At an assembly about equipping the fleet, three speeches by two of the chosen generals are reported, namely one by Nicias, then one by Alcibiades, and one by Nicias again. The historian grants this length to address the issues for and against this huge venture, with emphasis on the cautions of Nicias. The “second thoughts” about the aggressive use of power recall the Mytilenean debate, but here they are called for by Nicias' deep doubts about the expedition. The whole passage is built on the classic literary theme of the clash between the older, wiser, tragic warner and the impetuous young warrior (see barbs traded at Th. 6.13, 16, 18). Nicias first assesses the situation and proposes a suitable policy (like Pericles at Th. 1.141–4), including attending to Thrace before venturing overseas (Th. 6.10–11). Alcibiades contends that Sicily is not too formidable, noting how fragmented it is and recalling the great victory over Persia (6.17). Nicias sees

that dissuading the people is impossible and devotes his second speech to a shopping list of sorts, reasoning that he would either dissuade them through the magnitude of the needs or at least secure safety if the needs are met (Th. 6.24).

The enthusiasm for the expedition is not only unabated, but transformed into a “passionate desire” (*erōs*) that afflicted everyone, old and young (Th. 6.24) – an ominous description. The celebration before the outset is marred by an infamous episode, a night of revelry in Athens in which youths deface public statues of Hermes – an episode known as the “desecration of the Herms” – and some perform a parody of the sacred Eleusinian Mysteries (Th. 6.27). Alcibiades is among those accused; nonetheless he is allowed to sail with the fleet. Thucydides gives a virtually cinematic description of the fleet’s departure, certainly performable in a public recitation – “an expedition no less celebrated for the miraculousness of its daring and its splendor to look upon than for its military superiority” (Th. 6.31; see 6.30–2; Hornblower 2008: 31).

The scene shifts to Syracuse to gauge the thought and mood there, beginning with speeches by Hermocrates, a voice of reason urging Syracusans to believe in rumors of the expedition and strongly resist; by Athenagoras, a popular leader perhaps representing a demagogic emotionalism (like Cleon’s in the Mytilenean speech), who sows doubt that the expedition will happen; and by an anonymous general taking a middle ground (Th. 6.33–41). Thucydides also implies parallels to the three Athenian speeches about preparing for the clash, analogies between the democracies of Syracuse and Athens in their daring and ambitious character, and the perils inherent in their response to crisis (Connor 1984: 168–76). Nicias had observed that the opponent cities in Sicily were “not likely to accept our rule [*archē*] instead of freedom” and were “prepared in all ways with a character very similar to our power” – not least Syracuse and Selinus (Th. 6.20, Scanlon).

My translation emphasizes the fact that it is not just types of similar armed forces at play, as are enumerated, but the unusual phrase “similar character” (*homoiotropos*) intends to allude also to their determination to fight to maintain their freedom, as Athens had typically done. The same word is used by Thucydides of the Sicilian opponents later, before the decisive battle in Syracuse: “similar in character, democratically ruled just as they were, and possessing ships, cavalry, and size” (Th. 6.55). “National” character, in other words the public image of the character of a city-state as formulated by itself or others, of course loomed large in the speech of the Corinthians describing Athens and Sparta at 1.70. “Character” (*tropos*) is a dimension of human nature, but is not “nature” (*phusis*) entirely; rather, in Greek, character is literally a “turning” (< *trepein*) or “disposition” that marks one group or individual apart from others. If human nature is inclined across cities and peoples toward greed, ambition, and emotionality, then character may be less predictable; but might it also be more educable, less universally engrained?

The answer is not clear from the text.

From the inconclusive debate at Syracuse we return to the arrival of the Athenian fleet to a less than enthusiastic welcome, to its staying on the Italian mainland at Rhegion, and to the Athenians being misled by a show of Egestan wealth (Th. 6.42–6). The three generals Nicias, Alcibiades, and Lamachus discuss their strategies, respectively, Nicias' plan to attack Selinus, win, and go home; Alcibiades' to win many allies, then attack Selinus and Syracuse; and Lamachus' to sail right against Syracuse (Th. 6.47–51). Alcibiades' plan is adopted but no progress is made, until the sacred trireme, the *Salaminia*, arrives from Athens to recall Alcibiades for trial in connection with the profanation of the Mysteries and desecration of the herms (Th. 6.53). This narrative only resumes in Book 6, chapter 61, where Alcibiades disappears in his own ship, en route back to Athens, is sentenced to death in absentia by the Athenians, and turns up later in Sparta (Th. 6.88).

The interim digression turns to the story of the so-called “tyrannicides” during Pisistratid rule and to Hippias' tyranny in Athens a century earlier (Th. 6.53–60). The excursus is justified here as an explanation of the extreme concern about Alcibiades, in view of the Athenians' decades-long, traumatic fear of tyrannical activity (Raaffaub 2003). The digression circles back to this at the end: “the people of Athens were at this time bitter and suspicious of anyone who stood accused over the Mysteries, and it seemed to them that it had all been done to further oligarchic and tyrannical conspiracies” (Th. 6.60). The conspiracy of the would-be tyrant slayers, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, arose out of a lover's grievance. The pair were pederastic lovers, and the younger Harmodius rejected the advances of the tyrant's brother, Hipparchus, who in turn seriously slighted Harmodius' sister by excluding her from a public procession and thus impugning her chastity (Th. 6.54). The pair then plotted revenge and “in all the fury that a man in love and a man humiliated could feel,” ended up killing the main offender, Hipparchus. They were caught and killed, and the tyranny continued under Hippias.

So much for Thucydides' version, which is an overt corrective to the popular Athenian understanding of the two lovers as “tyrant slayers,” since the tyranny was not harsh to start with but only became so after the conspiracy, and the ones who ended the tyranny were not the conspirators, but the Spartans. This is a point Thucydides emphasizes here and echoes as a prime example of faulty popular reasoning in the work's introduction (Th. 6.53, 59; cf. 1.20). Yet, in its length, the elaboration here goes far beyond the point made in the introduction, being justified by a brilliant virtual allegory uniting major themes running through the work, notably from the start of Book 6 up until here: the tyrannicide episode and the Sicilian expedition, and to some degree the whole war, were events that were misconceived, rashly planned, badly executed, and inaccurately reported (by others) (*pace* Vickers 1995: 193–200, who rejects applying the term “allegory” to the digression but

argues well for the Hippias–Alcibiades parallels that fit the argument here). In essence, several points relate to the author’s running themes of power and human nature:

1. The metaphorical “passionate desire” (*erōs*) of the Athenians for the expedition (Th. 6.24) is paralleled by Alcibiades’ own literal licentiousness and by his unrestrained ambition for undertaking this expedition to widen the Athenian empire (Th. 6.15). *Erōs* is also of course echoed in the sexual tensions of the “tyrannicides” and Hipparchus. All these desires are overexercised and recall Diodotus’ warnings in the Mytilenean debate that *erōs* typically prompts action in the face of opposition (Th. 3.45).
2. The Athenians’ century-old, traumatic fear and suspicion of Hipparchus’ personal license has triggered the recall of Alcibiades (Th. 6.15, 28, 59).
3. Thucydides implicitly equates literal and figurative *erōs* in assessing the ways in which passions blur productive analysis and affect real outcomes – how power is maintained or disrupted; the most egregious example is that the Athenians of his day did not even know the name of the tyrant or that the regime was “not oppressive toward the people in its use of rule [*archē*] but managed it without arousing resentment; these tyrants actually operated with honorable conduct [*aretē*] and intelligence to a very great extent” (Th. 6.54, adapted); these rare qualities are otherwise praised only in Brasidas (Th. 4.81).
4. Misapprehension was a major factor in the Athenian (and Sicilian) planning related to the expedition, in the perception of Alcibiades as a would-be tyrant, and in the Athenian misunderstanding of the events around and outcome of the earlier “tyrannicides.” The misunderstanding of the tyrannicides episode is further linked to Thucydides’ introductory section on methodology by echoing the need to see the “clear truth” behind events: “neither other sources nor the Athenians themselves say anything accurate about their own tyrants nor the incident” (Th. 6.54, echoing exactly the same complaint as in the programmatic 1.20); “since [the Athenians] thought they had clear certainty [*saphes*] in the matter of the herms, the affair of the Mysteries looked all the more like the work of Alcibiades, for the same purpose of conspiracy against the democracy” (Th. 6.61; see 1.22 on serving readers who want to examine “the clear truth” [*to saphes*] of events, and also Meyer 2008).

In sum, this digression reiterates the crucial leitmotifs of the history to this point regarding how human emotions and personal motivations too often masquerade as concern for the public good, but in fact harm collective interests in both the short and the long term. Though Thucydides does not

mention it, his reading public was well aware of the common lore – that the two heroes saved Athens from tyranny, whence the public statues erected to them and a virtual “national anthem” sung in their honor (Hornblower, 2008: 437–40). So great was this misapprehension in the minds of the Athenian public that it contributed to the institution of ostracism against individuals who were viewed as potential tyrants. How does the digression relate to the metaphor of Athenian rule as a tyranny over others under Athens’ empire (Pericles at Th. 2.63, Cleon at Th. 3.37)? A tyranny may begin by being benevolent toward its subjects, but, if the subjects turn hostile, the ruler must be prepared to face and respond to resistance (Scanlon 1987). Ironically, the corollary emerges in Book 6, where citizens who fear the tyranny of individuals can, by overly emotional reaction, become just as violent as the tyrant.

With Alcibiades gone, the generals Nicias and Lamachus lead the Athenian operations on the north coast of Sicily in 415 BC (Th. 6.62–71). Before a battle at the River Anapus near Syracuse, Nicias delivers a military exhortation of a sort of which there are numerous examples in this author (e.g., four in Book 7) and in other historians. While we leave open the question whether the speeches were actually given, we can say that Thucydides’ willingness to include them indicates that they perform some valuable functions in the work, such as to characterize the morale of the troops, to give the strategy of the speaker, to remind readers of the stakes and motivation, and to create empathy and suspense. In the event, the Syracusans are routed, but without major consequences.

In Syracuse, Hermocrates, whose major speeches earlier embodied wise strategies (Th. 4.58–64 and 6.32–5), again gives advice that Syracusans strengthen their position; Thucydides praises him for having shown “competent skill and notable bravery in war,” demonstrating that he is a man of action as well as of words (Th. 6.72). Thucydides’ approval suggests parallels between Hermocrates and Pericles, both being men of strength, leadership and integrity who can “tame” democracy (Hornblower 2008: 485). The scene shifts to Camarina, where Athens sought an alliance, and, at a conference to decide, Hermocrates’ speech appeals for alliance with Syracuse against imperialist Athens, while a responding speech by Euphemus of Athens defends their rule as a protective alliance born out of “fear” against Dorians (and, earlier, Persians), saying: “When a man is a tyrant, or a city rules an empire (*archē*), no factor is unreasonable if advantageous, nor akin if not trustworthy” (Th. 6.85; cf. 2.63, 3.37). Euphemus indeed turns the imperialist accusation around, to suggest that Syracuse itself is the greatest threat to the independence of Sicilian cities (Th. 6.85–7; “their aim is to rule over you ... to rule Sicily themselves,” Th. 6.85). The two speeches reinvoke the theme of imperialism and the tyrant state that threads through the work (see esp. Th. 1.75), but here significantly facing off Athenian and Syracusan aims and

claims, perhaps with an element of truth in both accounts. The historian selects the Camarina debate since that city has different but equal obligations to the cities of the speakers (Hornblower 2008: 491–2). But the debate also introduces a new, flawed reasoning by the Athenians that Ionian cities need to unite against Dorian ones, as ethnicity is added to the justification (Th. 6.82; Connor 1984: 182–4). The Camarinaeans, out of self-interest, opt to remain neutral for the time being, though eventually they side with Syracuse (Th. 6.88; 7.33, 58).

Though Sparta has thus far not agreed to help Syracuse, the maverick Alcibiades, now on the run, arrives at Sparta and delivers a speech aimed at aiding and abetting this city's war strategy (Th. 6.89–92). The speaker defends his own reputation, reveals Athens' war plans (virtual conquest of the whole Mediterranean, Th. 6.90), and then makes specific suggestions to Sparta, notably to fortify Decelea in Attica in order to cut off Athens' silver mines. The speech contains tantalizing factual or verbal echoes of Herodotus, namely with reference to Alcibiades' ancestors being enemies of tyranny and leaders of the people (Hdt. 3.82; 5.66; 6.121, 123; Hornblower 2008: 511–12). Alcibiades' very presence in Sparta is bizarre and striking; in brilliant leadership, cleverness, and shifting allegiance he is reminiscent of the Herodotean Themistocles (invoked earlier by Thucydides 1.90–3, 105–8). Aeschines wrote a Socratic dialogue, *Alcibiades* (fragmentarily extant), in which Alcibiades compares himself to the earlier general but is shown as less brilliant (Döring 2011: 28–30). Alcibiades continues to appear in the work and, like Themistocles, ends up in Persia. It may be that the present allusion and Alcibiades' post-Sicily career allude to the controversial general and the earlier passage, but against him Alcibiades comes up short in devotion to and accomplishments for his city. In this case Alcibiades does motivate Sparta to establish its base in Attica, which becomes a centerpiece in this half of the war, often called the Decelean War. In Sicily, the Athenians at Catana get reinforcements from Athens and proceed to occupy the hill site of Epipolae above Syracuse, building an elaborate wall successfully against countermeasures of the Syracusans (Th. 6.94–103). After an ironic start to the book suggesting the overreach of empire, the Athenian hopes of victory mount, despite setbacks from the loss of a general and the lack of local allies (Connor 1984: 185–7).

Book 7

The Athenian reversal begins with the start of this book: the Syracusans narrowly manage to save their city by maneuvers against the wall of the besiegers. Nicias despairs of winning without fresh forces and a new general from home, which is communicated bluntly in a lengthy letter that conveys the change of morale (Th. 7.12–15). He tells the Athenians: “Your natures are not easy to rule” (addressed to both those at home and those in the field who listen only to good news) (Th. 7.14, Connor 1984: 188). There are intimations that the ultimate defeat can happen, as it does. But the Athenians deny Nicias permission to return and send two generals and more forces to help, Gylippus immediately, and Demosthenes the next spring. Thucydides, we may surmise, felt that Nicias should have been recalled, as he remarked earlier that after Pericles: “the [Athenian] senders [to Sicily] did not subsequently make decisions advantageous to the participants” (Th. 2.65), a remark also alluding to the mistake of recalling Alcibiades (Hornblower 1991: 348).

The next large section (Th. 7.16–46) focuses mainly on the campaign of Demosthenes in Sicily, but is scattered with chapters on the reinvigoration of the Spartans’ morale and their fortification of Decelea in Attica (Th. 7.18–20). An effect of this is the botched attempt to send 1,300 light-armed Thracian troops to serve in Sicily with Demosthenes (Th. 7.27–30). When they arrive too late to sail with him they are sent back home, but they stop in Boeotia with vague orders to harm the enemy. The Athenian escort, Diitrephes, is unable to stop them from going berserk in the village of Mycalessus, where they slaughter everyone they meet, men, women, and children, including a whole school house full of boys: “this disaster, both unimagined and terrible beyond all others, was second to none befalling the whole city ... [Mycalessus] in proportion to its size experienced a fate as pitiable as any in the war” (Th. 7.29–30). The historian shows regard, here and elsewhere, for fundamental human pathos, notably when military plans go awry and soldiers behave at a raw level, not governed by Greek norms. Not *all* is fair in war.

Meanwhile at Syracuse the Athenians under Gylippus lose a fort (Th. 7.24) and then lose a battle, significantly because the Syracusans have made technical improvements to their triremes, out-innovating the innovative enemy (Th. 7.36–41). Thucydides says of the Syracusans and their allies: “these cities, alone among the ones they attacked, were similar to them in their character, democratically ruled, and possessing the resources of ships, cavalry and size as well” (Th. 7.55, adapted). Being “similar in character” (*homoiotropos*) is also used of only Syracuse and Athens later (Th. 8.96), and shows the historian’s psychological level of analysis of the two states in explaining why the war was so prolonged.

On his arrival Demosthenes is confident that “the power [*dunamin*] of the

Athenians was obviously great in every respect,” and a long sentence reveals his supposed thoughts and motivation, ending in a decision to attack Syracuse directly (Th. 7.42). He posits two options – either the shock attack will succeed, or he will lose and withdraw without wearing out the city – not seeing that the second will turn out to be, as readers know, false (Connor 1984: 192). The land battle at night first succeeds, but there is a dramatic reversal when the Athenians are routed, which is described in a vivid narration of those forces in chaos and confusion, of yelling in the dark, of fighting one’s allies and throwing themselves off cliffs to escape (Th. 7.44). A first sea battle at Syracuse is an Athenian setback (Th. 7.50–4). The defeats are now compounded by the failure of Athenian generals, Nicias in particular, to agree on withdrawal, and the unwillingness of the Syracusans to allow it (Th. 7.46–60). The Greeks have a chance to get away but delay twice, the second time because of the ill omen of a lunar eclipse, special attention being paid to Nicias’ being “indeed over-credulous about divination and everything of the sort” (Th. 7.50). Religious scruples cause a serious tactical mistake, but faulty collective human psychology is the real weakness. Demosthenes’ belief in the power of Athens has been proven wrong. The Syracusans then proceed to seal off their harbor to prevent Athenian escape by sea, which leads to Thucydides’ conventional catalogue of ships before the great final battle (Th. 7.56–9). Oddly, the catalogue details the motives of combatant groups and reveals the author’s consistent concern with the fundamental human motives of desire and fear: “[these were the participants] aligning themselves not out of principle or kinship so much as in accordance with the degree of advantage or compulsion each found in its lot” (Th. 7.57; Connor 1984: 195).

Prior to the great sea battle at Syracuse, we find a series of speeches encouraging the combatants before the battle, by Nicias, then by “the generals and Gylippus,” and an emotional if conventional final exhortation by Nicias asking men to remember their wives, children, and ancestral gods (Th. 7.61–9); Nicias also gives a moving speech before the tragic defeat. Nicias is clearly the person best to convey the core issues and the dramatic shifts as the historian understood them. In one sense the first speech of Nicias is a retrospective defense, to later fellow Athenians and Greeks, that all possible measures had been taken (Th. 7.61–4). We see here also the speaker’s (or the author’s?) view of how the non-Athenians in the navy were encouraged to take pride in “sharing fully in the empire, even though it was ours ... free as partners in our empire [*archē*]” (Th. 7.63). Empire, then, as in the earlier images of Pericles and other Athenians, remains an essential source of pride; “being wondered at” comes into both Pericles’ funeral oration and Nicias’ speech (Th. 2.41, 7.63; Rood 1998b: 183). Fame lasts even if the empire does not, this passage suggests – presumably thanks largely to the historian’s account.

The actual narrative of the great naval battle in the harbor at Syracuse is less a

technical battle description than a performable, almost cinematic, narrative of a vision of almost two hundred ships struggling desperately in a close space while onlookers' gazes were fastened on the event (Th. 7.69–71): “[those viewing] were kept in the most painful state of all on account of the continued uncertainty of the conflict, the intensity of the fear making their bodies sway back and forth to match their perceptions” (Th. 7.71). Bringing the climactic contest to life and engaging readers emotionally were legitimate and important functions of ancient literary presentations, nowhere more effective than here (see Plb. 3.43 for an imitation; Connor 1984: 196–7). Herodotus' narrative of the battle of Salamis (Hdt. 8.84–92), if Thucydides emulated it at all, seems bulky in comparison, but is comparable as the description of a decisive clash at sea and a major turning point late in the war – here ironically reversed, the Athenians being defeated. There may also be an ironic parallel here to the Pylos episode – ships in a narrow space, surprising the enemy and at that time enjoying a glorious Athenian triumph (Connor 1984: 197). In the event, the Syracusan Hermocrates caps the victory by blocking any Athenian escape, as the Greeks had not done with Xerxes' forces after Salamis (Th. 7.73–4; cf. Hdt. 8.108–19).

Thucydides gives an extensive account of the withdrawal, destruction, and imprisonment of the Athenian army at Syracuse: the army is in a sorry state (Th. 72–6); Nicias gives a last address (Th. 7.77); the retreat is described (Th. 7.78–83); there is a pitiable slaughter at the River Assinarus (Th. 7.84); Nicias and Demosthenes are executed, the former being assessed by the historian (Th. 7.86); the remnant surrender and many die laboring in a marble quarry (Th. 7.85–7). The whole section gives closure to the epic progress of an ill conceived and poorly strategized, if valiantly fought, expedition. The slaughter of fleeing forces at the Assinarus is a horrid picture of mass slaughter, evocative of the description of deaths during the Plague in Book 2, but here the dehydrated men crush one another trying to cross the river and to drink from its muddy and bloody waters as the pursuers rain down spears (Th. 7.84). It is the counterpoint to the glorious departure of the fleet in Book 6. Nicias had just addressed them in their despair, in a speech that notes good fortune arising from belief in the gods and invokes hope in the future, two appeals we last heard from the desperate Melians – hope in the gods being otherwise rare in Thucydides' reality (Th. 7.77; cf. 5.104). Nicias ends with the cliché that, as the men are isolated here, “you who are Athenians will raise up again, fallen as it is, the great power of the city; men are the city, not walls and ships without men” (Th. 7.77). There is only pathos in this reassurance, reminding readers of the mighty power of the past and ignoring the Thucydidean formula that power must be derived from walls, ships, and material resources (especially at Th. 1.1–19; see Kallet-Marx 1993 and Kallet 2001). Yet the comment seems not to belittle the appeal to pious hope, but rather to sympathize with Nicias' admirable and rare, yet ultimately pernicious, adherence to a traditional code of values in the face of the realities

of force. Perhaps the difference here is that Nicias' self-representation comes essentially to bring a modicum of merciful comfort to his men, and it does not cloud crucial decision making. Nicias' religious scruples, as noted earlier, were only partly to blame for an undue delay in action (Th. 7.50). At the end, after his death, in a quasi-obituary, Thucydides empathizes with Nicias as a tragic hero of sorts, concluding: "he died, although of all the Hellenes, at least in my time, certainly the least deserving to reach this level of misfortune because of a way of life directed entirely toward virtue" (Th. 7.86). The "virtue" (*aretē*) admired here is civic excellence and altruistic generosity, in other words Nicias had not misused his wealth to bribe his way to safety; and he had told Gylippus, when surrendering, "to do as he pleased with him but stop the massacre of the rest of the soldiers" (Th. 7.85). The chapter ends with a dismal summary of seven thousand Athenians and allies dying while ill-fed and working in the hot, deep and narrow quarries of Syracuse: "this Hellenic event turned out to be the greatest connected with this war and, at least in my opinion, of Hellenic events we have heard of, the most splendid for those who won and the most wretched for those who were ruined"; he names it "total destruction" (*panōlethria*) – a term that, as mentioned above, recalls the destruction of Troy (Th. 7.87). It has been pointed out that Book 7, unlike any in Thucydides, is resonant with both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in invoking a homecoming that never happens (Allison 1997a).

Book 8

The epic defeat in Sicily seems to signal a tragic closure to the war, but the history of the war is a massive and tantalizing fragment; the account ends abruptly in 411 BC, but what the narrative ending would have been is only hinted at by Thucydides in the obituary for Pericles: “And after they had failed in Sicily ... and now had a revolutionary situation in the city, they nevertheless still held out against both their previous enemies ... and they did not give in until, coming to grief through individual disputes, they brought about their own overthrow” (Th. 2.65). In essence, then, this book shifts to a new story of the internal dissolution of the city owing to its inability to unite against external danger.

The narrative is complex, as were the events, and this requires a virtually new, punchy, episodic style, whose unity is less obvious than in Books 6 and 7, yet whose coherence is present through variations on several motifs: the playing of the “Persian card” by both sides, the constant self-centered intrigues of Alcibiades, the resilience of Athens against external foes and yet its endless internal convulsions, and the Peloponnesians’ triumph and demoralization (Dewald 2005: 152–4). The themes continue to include human ambition and greed and a lack of civic mindedness, difficult now to preserve even as a formal pretense. How these are woven more tightly into the “end game” of the war, the final books Thucydides might have written, we can only guess, but the threads indicate coherence of the new pattern, which continues in Xenophon’s less impressive but somewhat similar narrative of Books 1 and 2 of the *Hellenica*.

We offer only a brief overview of this book’s discursive story. Initial despair at the loss of Sicily turns into a determination not to give in; the fear of an allied revolt and the concern about Sicilian finances are shown to be overstated (Th. 8.9, 8.26). The Spartans continue to attack Athens from Decelea, and numerous revolts of former allies break out. But one major change is the collaboration of Sparta with Persia for the sake of financial favors from the “barbarians,” while the Persians are actually manipulating Greek politics to prevent the emergence of any strong Hellenic state that might threaten them, a ruse that continues long past the end of this war. Treaty documents remarkably verify the freedom of other Greeks that Sparta was willing to “sell out” for its own ends, despite many earlier claims of “liberating Greece” from Athens (Th. 8.84). Alcibiades attempts to work his way back to a reconciliation with the Athenians in Book 8 by promising to woo the Persians, through the satrap Tissaphernes, to side with Athens. The duplicitous, self-serving psychology of both the Athenian and the Persian characters comes to the fore here, just as baser human motives had throughout the earlier work (8.45–58). Alcibiades’ machinations are scuttled when the

oligarchy of the Four Hundred comes to power. On Samos there occurred an Athenian antidemocratic revolt, then later a counterrevolution to restore democracy on the island, while Athens itself is split between pro- and anti-oligarchs. The Peloponnesians win a victory off Euboea, and that valuable island is lost to Athens, but the victors, due to their sluggish character in Thucydides' view, fail to exploit their advantage by taking the Piraeus. The Athenians finally restore a mostly democratic regime and manage a sea victory against the Peloponnesians at the Hellespont. The abrupt end comes with Tissaphernes trying to reconcile with the Peloponnesians in 411 BC, for his own self-serving reasons.

Yet behind the external back-and-forth struggles there emerges a crucial, newly invigorated political dimension, namely an internal strife to stabilize the government of Athens, culminating in the governments of the Four Hundred and the oligarchic Five Thousand (Connor 1984: 214–15). The loss of political coherence in the city is its own greatest enemy. An Athenian democratic faction is empowered on Samos (Th. 8.76), an oligarchic one in Athens is further split into moderate and extreme oligarchs (Th. 8.89).

Thucydides' skepticism of both oligarchy and democracy controlling Athens' allies is reflected in a passage describing the revolt of Thasos:

For the Athenian establishers of oligarchy, then, what happened was the opposite of what they wanted regarding Thasos, I suppose, among many of their other subjects as well. For after the cities had been given "moderate government" and freedom of action, they went on to outright independence, attaching no value to the sham of "law and order" under the Athenians.

(Th. 8.64)

The historian uncovers the hypocrisy of the oligarchs and how it affects external affairs, as it will continue to do for the rest of the war. The contrasting passion for and fear of the Athenian oligarchs recalls the force of human passions elsewhere in the work (Th. 8.66; cf. the fear after the incidents of the Eleusinian Mysteries and herms before the Sicilian expedition, Th. 6.24; Connor 1984: 223). No single Athenian leader dominates in this section, but men like the famously wily Phrynicus and the skilled orator Antiphon, part of the Four Hundred conspiracy, show great talent, albeit wasted on self-seeking manipulation of the government and people (Th. 8.68). The historian's striking praise of the government of the Five Thousand (who succeeded the Four Hundred) has caused scholars to wonder how to square this with his praise of democracy through Pericles in the funeral oration:

And not least – for the first time in my experience – the Athenians appear to have governed themselves well. For a balanced mixture of the few and the many came about, and this above all raised the city out of the

difficulties that beset it.

(Th. 8.97, Connor 1984: 228)

Had Thucydides changed his view of government forms? More likely, the phrase “governed themselves well” applies to their conduct rather than to the form of government, and “balanced mixture” alludes to an appreciation of the moderation of the oligarchic and democratic forms to achieve stability in the city.

Conclusions

Thucydides was moved, intellectually and emotionally, to write about a war through which he lived; he was stirred by a deeply personal experience, distinct from Herodotus’, as is evident throughout the Thucydidean narrative. While Thucydides, too, owes much to Homer and earlier poetic and ethical thought, his innovative perspective resonates with the style and thought of the later fifth century, with the expression of Presocratic philosophers and sophists, with Euripidean searching, and with Hippocratic concerns with the emerging life sciences. Thucydides does not endorse any particular intellectual movement or political stance, but his work reflects the highly turbulent atmosphere of the times and it presents the war to others as a case study in human interactions and reactions during the great challenge to Athenian rule.

His description of the dynamics of history in new terms – in speeches of others, in his own digressions, and in his insights into the actions of the participants on all sides – is the essence of his contribution to the genre. The greatest legacies of Thucydides are arguably his bold invention of a new prose language, his sharp focus on the human psyche, and his pressing determination to bring to light the truth behind the hypocrisy or the muddled reasoning of words and deeds that eroded Greek states from within. Belief in divine manipulation or fate is replaced by a clear concept of human nature as the grand motivator in history. He is also determined to trace the failures and successes of states and persons in power, which he does with the insider’s sense of intense interest and insight. Xenophon and Polybius, among his heirs, also evidence an insider’s perspective and insight at times, but they lack his intensity and focus. Eternal glory is implied in Thucydides’ admiration of the power of Pericles’ Athens, but a more ordinary and lasting shame is described in the self-serving impulses of those in civil strife at Corcyra and in Athens after the Sicilian disaster.

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4

Xenophon on Leadership and Moral Authority

From the powerful and monumental creations of Herodotus and Thucydides, there is in their wake a diverse and lively stream of authors who seek to make their own mark on the genre. These authors reflect the complex political and military realities in an increasingly fragmented nexus of Greek city-states of the fourth century prior to Alexander the Great. Among these historians, Xenophon requires special treatment, not for an original style, nor for deep insight into human or political causation, nor for grandly dramatic presentations. In these areas he is in the shadow of the two earlier giants. Xenophon is noteworthy, among other reasons, simply for being the sole author of this era whose entire historical corpus remains. His works fill in, from a contemporary perspective, much of the first half of the fourth century, partly because he is the one who takes up Greek affairs following Thucydides. Xenophon is also of note for affording clear narratives that convey an applied moral ethos of his age on the topics of leadership, pan-Hellenism, and the power of divine will.

Xenophon's self-consciously low profile in his historical works is evident from his avoidance of prologues. He neglects to frame the narrative with a justification or a sketch of the topic at hand, as Herodotus and Thucydides had done, and he does not offer any comments on historical methodology or thematic focus, as Thucydides does at length in his opening chapters. Instead Xenophon lets the story tell itself, in a transparently clear style and with a gradual progression of events. In the *Anabasis*, for example, the story of the failed expedition of the Persian prince Cyrus against his brother the king and of the perilous return of the mercenary army, the author joins the expedition as a hired soldier at the beginning but only mentions his presence for the first time at the start of Book 3, the point where he crucially suggests a plan of action in the face of danger. The self-introduction, which resembles Thucydides' similarly delayed narrative in Book 4, chapter 104, when he briefly enters the main action, follows:

There was a man in the army named Xenophon, an Athenian, who was neither general nor captain nor private, but had accompanied the expedition because Proxenus, an old friend of his, had sent him at his home an invitation to go with him; Proxenus had also promised him that, if he would go, he would make him a friend of Cyrus, whom he himself

regarded, so he said, as worth more to him than was his native state. After reading Proxenus' letter Xenophon conferred with Socrates, the Athenian, about the proposed journey; and Socrates, suspecting that his becoming a friend of Cyrus might be a cause for accusation against Xenophon on the part of the Athenian government, for the reason that Cyrus was thought to have given the Lacedaemonians zealous aid in their war against Athens, advised Xenophon to go to Delphi and consult the god in regard to this journey. So Xenophon went and asked Apollo to what one of the gods he should sacrifice and pray in order best and most successfully to perform the journey which he had in mind and, after meeting with good fortune, to return home in safety; and Apollo in his response told him to what gods he must sacrifice.

When Xenophon came back from Delphi, he reported the oracle to Socrates; and upon hearing about it Socrates found fault with him because he did not first put the question whether it were better for him to go or stay, but decided for himself that he was to go and then asked the god as to the best way of going. "However," he added, "since you did put the question in that way, you must do all that the god directed." Xenophon, accordingly, after offering the sacrifices to the gods that Apollo's oracle prescribed, set sail, overtook Proxenus and Cyrus at Sardis as they were on the point of beginning the upward march, and was introduced to Cyrus.

(*An.* 3.1.4–8, Brownson 1998)

The passage richly illustrates the author's ethos; his coincidental reasons for joining the expedition; his friendship with the famous Socrates; his piety in seeking advice and help from the gods; and the self-effacing revelation of his apparently asking the wrong question to the oracle. The thumbnail sketch hints at deeper themes in the work, notably the role of divine providence in guiding Xenophon and the Greeks in general. And, even though Socrates chides him for not asking whether even to join the event, it may be implicit that Xenophon's seeking the gods' help specifically for a safe return was a wise move, since the advice would, in the Greek view, have been crucial to the army's successful return. We also see here the caution about Cyrus not being a friend of the Athenians, and Xenophon's emphasis on joining more out of friendship to another Greek than out of trust in the motives of the Persian prince. The dramatic section immediately following (*X. An.* 3.1.11–14) describes Xenophon's dream of a thunderbolt hitting his father's house, which he first takes as a sign, from Zeus, of being shut in the Persian territory (Zeus representing the Persian king). But, upon waking up, he takes the vision as a warning and is moved to address the troops, urging them to defend themselves and to seek to escape adversity. The episode further shows Xenophon as a man of piety, but one also of leadership, clear reasoning, and rhetorical talent. Xenophon is praised by his men (*X. An.* 3.1.47) and put in charge of a company of the army.

Xenophon occupies an unusual position in Greek literature generally, since he published prolifically – he wrote works of history, philosophy, politics, memoirs, and technical treatises. His works generally fall into the categories of long historical narratives, Socratic texts, and treatises, but also shorter essays on encomium, political dialogue, and institutional analysis. All of his works convey his personal experience and a didactic manner. His uncomplicated morality stands in contrast to that of Thucydides and comes with a less sophisticated dramatizing than that of Herodotus. Xenophon's belief in the role of the gods emerges in his attention to oracles and ritual, though his piety is not all-pervasive. He takes a keen interest in moral leadership as embodied by individuals and sought vainly by states. He prizes military skill, valor, and discipline, for example in describing Agesilaus: "At this point one may unquestionably call Agesilaus courageous; at least he certainly did not choose the safest course" (X. *Hell.* 4.3.19, Brownson 1922; Brownson's translation will be used in all subsequent passages from the *Hellenica*).

Again, Agesilaus demonstrates piety: "For where men reverence the gods, train themselves in deeds of war, and practice obedience to authority, may we not reasonably suppose that such a place abounds in high hopes?" (X. *Hell.* 3.4.18). And Xenophon censures emotion as a basis for decisions in his criticism of Teleutias:

From such disasters, however, I hold that men are taught the lesson, chiefly, indeed, that they ought not to chastise anyone, even slaves, in anger – for masters in anger have often suffered greater harm than they have inflicted; but especially that, in dealing with enemies, to attack under the influence of anger and not with judgment is an absolute mistake. For anger is a thing which does not look ahead, while judgment aims no less to escape harm than to inflict it upon the enemy.

(X. *Hell.* 5.3.7)

Xenophon's style is a model of purity of Attic Greek, a quality that has made his texts the first choice for beginners in ancient Greek for many decades. The flow of the work can be sweet, persuasive, and at times even gracefully poetic. The style and level of analysis in the content may seem to some naïve, but perhaps that naïveté is for appearance, and his true worth is a transparency that wins the trust and sympathy of the general reader, treated to occasional irony and humor along with a balance and wisdom of presentation.

He, perhaps more than any historian until Plutarch, embodied Dionysius of Halicarnassus' dictum that "history is philosophy teaching by examples" (D.H. *Rh.* 11.2). We discuss here Xenophon's two major historical works that evidence his thematic interest in his personal experience of contemporary events and in didactic discourse. The *Anabasis*, perhaps a product of the early 370s BC, is our first extant commentary written by a participant, relating the

author's experience as primary director of a group of mercenaries in an arduous and risk-filled retreat to Greek territories after the expedition of Cyrus had failed to oust Cyrus' brother Artaxerxes II as Persian ruler. The unembellished style and restrained comments set a model for later military narratives, which are epitomized by Caesar's *Gallic War*. But leadership, fortitude, and fairness are the chief, implicit lessons of this text. The *Hellenica* was likely written over decades and was possibly published in the 350s, but it describes the events of 411 BC and following, where Thucydides' text leaves off. The narrative extends beyond the end of the Peloponnesian War (404 BC) and continues past the Spartan Thirty Tyrants at Athens and past Spartan and Theban hegemonies, to the battle of Mantinea in 362 BC. Xenophon was a partisan of Sparta in his life, and so his work naturally reflects disappointment in Sparta's ultimate failure. Positive didactic lessons, again, are evident, especially through the speeches (see Dillery 1995; Gray 1989): justness and generosity, not force, are the proper foundation of harmony among states; there is meaning, not always evident, in the chaos of human affairs, namely from a divine plan (a general Herodotean point, but here emphasizing order over revenge); the study of effective leadership and of the moral behavior of individuals and states is useful not only as a model for future behavior but also as an explanation of history (essentially a Thucydidean point, but here made more heavy-handedly).

Life and Times

As with most ancient historians, biographical evidence is slim and deductions from Xenophon's own writings form the most secure basis for supposition (Badian 2004: 33–53; Dreher 2004: 55–70; Sordi 2004: 71–8). Xenophon the Athenian was born about 430 BC, probably to a wealthy but politically inactive family, and then died shortly before 350 BC, either in Attica or in Corinth. He appears to have served in the Athenian cavalry, and he showed great knowledge of and affection for horses. He associated with Socrates and, like Plato, seems not to have been enthusiastic about democracy. He probably stayed in Athens under the Thirty Tyrants, and the amnesty of 403/2 BC likely protected him. Also like Plato, he was critical of the Thirty, and one reason for his mercenary exploits with Cyrus may have been insecurity at home. He was among the Greeks present at Cyrus' defeat at Cunaxa in 401 BC, and he played a crucial role in the retreat of the Ten Thousand after that ignominious loss. He served under Agesilaus in the Spartan expeditions of 396–394 BC in Asia and returned to Greece with that general at the start of the Corinthian War, being present at the battle of Coronea (394 BC) when the Spartans defeated the forces of Thebans, Argives, and Athenians (X. *Hell.* 4.3.15–20). Exactly when and why Xenophon was formally exiled from Athens is

uncertain: was it during and because of his service to the Persians, his service to Agesilaus, or, specifically, his fighting at Coronea – or was it due to some other affront? He, like Thucydides, does not in any case make an issue of it in his writing. At some point after 394 BC he was the beneficiary of an estate from the Spartans at Scillus, just south of Olympia (X. *An.* 5.3.7), where he probably wrote his *Anabasis*. He seems to have led a quiet scholarly life there, obviously benefiting primarily from Peloponnesian, and notably Spartan, sources. He lost the land after the battle of Leuctra in 371 BC, when the Eleans recovered local estates from Spartan control. Some speculate that the exile was revoked after his son Gryllus fought and died with the Athenians allied to Sparta against Thebes, at the battle of Mantinea (362 BC), the great victory over Thebes (X. *Hell.* 7.5.17). It is both a tribute to Xenophon's objectivity and restraint and a touching personal reflection, that the historian does not name his son, but says in his account of Mantinea simply "there fell brave men among them; and those also whom they slew were manifestly of a like sort" (X. *Hell.* 7.5.17). After leaving Scillus he lived in Corinth, and then probably Athens, possibly dying at Scillus, for reasons that cannot be recovered. In any case, the shifts of residence between Athens and the Peloponnese during his life indicate a cultural and intellectual attachment to both areas. Many have noted his high admiration for Spartan culture at large and for Agesilaus in particular, yet his writing avoids overt grandstanding or chauvinism. In general, Xenophon's outlook and his narratives were enriched by his varied cultural, political, and military experiences.

The *Anabasis*

Xenophon's own account of the events of the *Anabasis*, as related in the *Hellenica*, provides the best synopsis, and also poses a puzzle about the authorship of the text:

(401 BC) So ended the civil strife at Athens. Shortly after this Cyrus sent messengers to Lacedaemon and asked that the Lacedaemonians should show themselves as good friends to him as he was to them in the war against the Athenians. And the ephors, thinking that what he said was fair, sent instructions to Samius, at that time their admiral, to hold himself under Cyrus' orders, in case he had any request to make. And in fact Samius did zealously just what Cyrus asked of him: he sailed round to Cilicia at the head of his fleet, in company with the fleet of Cyrus, and made it impossible for Syennesis, the ruler of Cilicia, to oppose Cyrus by land in his march against the Persian king. As to how Cyrus collected an army and with this army made the march up country against his brother,

how the battle was fought, how Cyrus was slain, and how after that the Greeks effected their return in safety to the sea – all this has been written by Themistogenes the Syracusan.

(X. *Hell.* 3.1.1–2)

Plutarch read the reference to “Themistogenes” as a pseudonym meant to make the first-person narrative less hybriatic, and modern scholars have mostly seen it as a means to deliver propaganda without personal risk (Rood 2004a: 322), though Themistogenes may have been an actual chronicler of the same event. We have also the question of what the intended audience was for the *Anabasis*, whether the aim was to impress with or to justify the author’s actions: was it written for the Athenians, to explain Xenophon’s involvement with a heavily Spartan force, or for the Spartans, to gain favor with them, or for the wider Hellenic world, to memorialize Xenophon’s “finest hour” in what otherwise would have been an historical footnote? In any case, his authorial self-erasure in the *Hellenica* suggests a man who resorts to obfuscation to manage his public image.

Themes of the *Anabasis*

The narrative heart of the *Anabasis* is, then, both simple and absorbing: the story of a group of Greek mercenaries hired by the Persian prince Cyrus to try to gain the throne from his brother Artaxerxes, and the subsequent perilous retreat of the remnants of the Greek forces, the Ten Thousand, from inland Persia to the Black Sea and eventually to Pergamum. Tragic-like elements of fraternal strife for a throne are thus intermingled with epic dimensions of an odyssey of warriors returning home through liminal peoples. The Greek term *anabasis* designates a “march up country,” in this case from Sardis in Western Asia Minor to Cunaxa. Yet the “road back down,” *katabasis*, constitutes most of the account, Books 2 to 7. What begins as a mercenary exploit for Cyrus, being supposedly directed against enemy tribes, becomes at the Cilician gates an attempted fratricidal, power-grabbing coup; after Cunaxa, the narrative challenge is to sort order out of chaos, and with this come tests of leadership and strategy and a call for united action. The core is an archetype with affinities to the itinerant labors of Heracles or Theseus or to the mythic journey of Jason – a journey notable through the encounter with the Mossynoeci (X. *An.* 5.4.2–34), which Apollonius of Rhodos may have used as inspiration for his epic account of a strange “other” people, frozen in time (A.R. *Arg.* 2, 1015–29; Rood 2008).

Xenophon’s expedition also has ominous echoes with that of Xerxes in Herodotus: both relate journeys undertaken to exact revenge and to assert the power of the supreme commander; both use the same term for a “march” (*stolos*); and both describe crossing a river with a boat bridge (Rood 2004a:

311). Aside from the myriad differences, the comparison prompts readers to ask whether the mercenary expedition was to be seen as doomed by fate as the Persian one, and, if so, why. In one sense, yes, both expeditions failed in large part because of their misdirected, self-centered royal leaders. And, although Xenophon's Greeks were unpatriotic mercenaries and were fighting on the side of a deluded commander, the Ten Thousand, despite their diverse origins, embodied, at their best, a spirit of Greek unification and a valorous tenacity, two qualities shared with the Greek armies and navies that fought Xerxes. As we will see shortly, the Greek–barbarian contrast is a main unifying theme of the *Anabasis*.

Another theme is, obviously, leadership, as seen in the noble but flawed Cyrus and in the series of Greek leaders who improvise, motivate, and enable their men to survive. The importance of this theme and of Xenophon's account generally for later Greeks can be gauged from Polybius' understanding of the event told by Xenophon as an underlying cause of Alexander's undertaking his own "*anabasis*" against the Persians:

The true causes and origin of the invasion of Persia by Alexander are patent to everybody. They were, first, the return march of the Greeks under Xenophon through the country from the upper Satrapies; in the course of which, though throughout Asia all the populations were hostile, not a single barbarian ventured to face them; secondly, the invasion of Asia by the Spartan king Agesilaus, in which, though he was obliged by troubles in Greece to return in the middle of his expedition without effecting his object, he yet found no resistance of any importance or adequacy. It was these circumstances that convinced Philip of the cowardice and inefficiency of the Persians.

(Plb. 3.6)

So the work may have had supra-literary importance for later Greeks, marking a stage on the way to Alexander and characterizing the Greeks in the face of Persians. It is, however, unlikely that Xenophon envisioned such a cause and wrote for that purpose. While the historian celebrates the Greek successes against the barbarians, a careful reading shows that the Persian might was formidable and was not so much overcome as evaded. The *Anabasis* could be read as a negative paradigm of why not to attack Persia. If freedom is an aim of the march of the Ten Thousand initially under a Persian prince, the goal is not the liberation of Greece from Persia, but liberty associated with salvation from an annihilation of the Greek army by the Persians. The historian's text conveys more forcefully the individual and collective struggle in isolation amid a diverse collection of foes. Alexander and his troops may have gathered some hope and some wisdom from Xenophon's tales of survival and flexibility en route to Persia, but their deeper inspiration was the desire to redress the insult to Greek honor from the invasions of the Persian Wars – let

alone Macedonia's own imperial ambitions.

Xenophon's diplomacy and leadership qualities may not put him in the ranks of Pericles, yet parallels can be drawn to both leaders' reliance on learning from mistakes, speaking frankly to the group at the right time, planning well, and maintaining good order. In mobilizing the men to organize after the defeat at Cunaxa, Xenophon invokes the Athenians' courage at Marathon and the Greek victories at Salamis and Plataea during the Persian War (X. *An.* 3.2.13), and then again he voices concerns about the possibility of the Greeks staying in the king's territory, as the monarch may prefer:

I really fear, however, that if we once learn to live in idleness and luxury, and to consort with the tall and beautiful women and maidens of these Medes and Persians, we may, like the lotus-eaters, forget our homeward way.

(X. *An.* 3.2.25)

This section resonates not only with the end of Herodotus' *History* regarding the enfeebling of men by a luxurious environment (Hdt. 9.122), but obviously also with the *Odyssey*, as Xenophon here steps into the role of Odysseus (Hom. *Od.* 9.94ff.). The rhetorical tropes are not highly original, but they illustrate how Xenophon situates himself in the historical and literary tradition, both as a leader with a great and perilous mission and as the narrator or author.

We noted above Xenophon's first actions (X. *An.* 3.1.11–14) in the expedition, his dream that results in a call to action. He then gives a speech to rouse Proxenus' captains (X. *An.* 3.1.15–25), denouncing the villainy of the king who mutilated his brother's corpse and asserting that, despite the Persians' daunting wealth, the gods as judges of the contest will likely side with the Greeks. Xenophon then refutes the suggestion to surrender made by a Boeotian soldier, who is later seen as an infiltrator from Lydia (X. *An.* 3.1.15–25). On this occasion Xenophon's final speech encourages a Spartan-like military order (*eutaxia*) and impresses fellow soldiers:

For discipline, it seems, keeps men in safety, while the lack of it has brought many before now to destruction ... those who are anxious in war to save their lives in any way they can are the very men who usually meet with a base and shameful death; while those who have recognized that death is the common and inevitable portion of all mankind and therefore strive to meet death nobly are precisely those who are somehow more likely to reach old age and who enjoy a happier existence while they do live.

(X. *An.* 3.1.38 and 43)

Along the same lines is another episode later in the march in which a court of inquiry is held and the generals review some men's complaints that Xenophon

had struck them, in particular the grievance of a mule driver (X. *An.* 5.8.2–8). Xenophon defends himself in an eloquent, virtually Socratic apology that explains that the mule driver had refused to follow orders and had begun to bury an invalid comrade alive rather than carry him. Xenophon compares himself to a good parent or teacher who disciplines children or a doctor who cauterizes a wound to save a patient; his anger is never unreasonable, and others he has struck were disciplined for their good, to uphold order, he says. His arguments are in line with the strict and sometimes physical discipline allowed at times by the Greeks. To an extent the historian's text does constitute an "anti-democratic discourse" (Rood 2004a: 328), but this justice is a military justice that sometimes allowed the physical disciplining of fellow Greeks. The archetype is Odysseus' beating of Thersites in *Iliad* 2.

Themes of divine and human guidance are intertwined, not just for narrative effect, but because the author, like Herodotus and unlike Thucydides, sees an intrinsic linkage between the parallel forces that determine one's fate. Yet for Xenophon there is no grand scheme of reciprocity, long-term punishment for hybistic transgression, as there is for Herodotus. Rather Xenophon's view is one of simple Greek piety, which believes in theistic forces and responds with prayer or ritual, but comprehends them only fragmentarily. On one occasion a Greek soldier urges his comrades not to make a truce with the foes but to fight them; then he sneezes. All take it as a sign from the gods, and Xenophon says that a sacrifice is due to Zeus the Savior (X. *An.* 3.2.9). Xenophon gives his men hope, since they have stayed true to their oaths to the gods and the opponents have not; during the Persian Wars too the Athenians held to their oaths and the Persians were defeated (X. *An.* 3.2.10–14). At another time a diviner in the army sacrifices to the winds, to make them abate (X. *An.* 4.5.4).

After a victory over the Colchians and arrival at the sea at Trapezus, the Greeks sacrifice to Zeus for their salvation and to Heracles for guidance, and they hold celebratory athletic contests, punctuating war with games (X. *An.* 4.8.25–8). The games, oddly, feature free Greeks running against captive slaves and a horse race with horses running to an altar uphill and tumbling downhill on the return. The episode may make several points: the Greeks adhere to Greek sacrificial rituals and games, but some say that the oddities may point to the soldiers being "less than Greek" (Golden 1998: 1–3). It is more likely that an improvised contest among warriors calls for improvised venues and rules, as in *Iliad* 23, for instance; the Ten Thousand are as Greek here as the Homeric warriors.

Narrative of the *Anabasis*

The narrative proper starts directly with the death of King Darius and the subsequent Persian royal family tensions, which launch Cyrus into his

attempted coup. The absence of any introduction – be it the name of the author or a few lines on the topic or some programmatic reasons for taking up the topic – is itself noteworthy. This is certainly out of line with Herodotus, Thucydides, and others and suggests a deliberate authorial invisibility. Whether the silence and anonymity were meant to counter an unfavorable account by a certain Sophaenetos of Stymphalos, or had other reasons mentioned earlier, it is true that the reader, ancient or modern, has to enter the text clueless, without hints at the direction of the narrative or at what motivated the project (Flower 2012: 30–4). Nonetheless, the sweep into the story involves us directly and does not obfuscate. It is the straightforward narration of a journey, with many phases and reversals, and hence easy to follow. But the direct approach also has the strategic virtue of taking us along from beginning to end, with few distractions of explicit comment or digression by the author. Surely Xenophon cannot have been without a “program” for his writing; rather he embedded the themes, and he unfolds them as we progress along with him. His views and didacticism are indeed present, but they are less intrusive and transparent than those of his predecessors.

Cyrus gathers a force at Sardis and engages the mercenary help of Greek friends (Clearchus from the Chersonese, Aristippus of Thessaly, Proxenus of Boeotia – Xenophon’s friend – and others) on the pretext of regaining Miletus from Tissaphernes with the king’s knowledge. The outbound trip is a tale of deception by Cyrus and performances of valor by the Greeks – a story contrasting ethnic and cultural differences between Greeks and barbarians. An early stop at Peltae features Greek athletic contests held by Xenias of Arcadia and in honor of Lycaean Zeus, the major Arcadian deity. A bit later, in the plain of Tyriaeum, Greek forces kitted out with bronze helmets, red cloaks, greaves, and uncovered shields stage a display of military prowess, which (somewhat humorously) terrifies the barbarian horsemen and infantry and sends the local Cilician queen Epyaxa to flight (X. *An.* 1.2.18). Again the point is the thematic contrast between Greek discipline and prowess and barbarian inadequacy. Barbarian licentiousness is further implied in the rumored affair between Cyrus and Epyaxa.

The first speech of the *Anabasis* – Book 1, [chapter 3](#) – is that of Clearchus, leader of the Ten Thousand, at an assembly in which he attempts to quell a mutiny. Clearchus pledges to stay with his men and “never to prefer the friendship of the barbarians” to that of Greeks, adding: “I think of you as my homeland.” Through the rhetoric and the salutary results, Clearchus proves his pragmatic leadership talents. He manipulates his men and reassures Cyrus that all will be fine in the end. In a second speech Clearchus reminds the Greeks that they need Cyrus’ resources at this point. There is an inherent mistrust of Cyrus and of his pretext for the expedition, and the Greeks go along after getting a pay raise.

En route to the Euphrates, Cyrus finally reveals to the Greek leaders his true intent of going to Babylon and promises a supplement of twenty months' pay (5 minas in silver) to entice them to continue (X. *An.* 1.4.13). The fact that the Euphrates is lower than usual and crossable is taken, erroneously, to mean that Cyrus is to succeed in becoming king. Human reading of omens, Xenophon seems to acknowledge, can be fallible.

Xenophon uses the conventional catalogue of forces to illustrate that Cyrus' forces of 100,000 barbarians, 10,400 Greek regulars, and 2,500 peltasts (i.e., light-armed soldiers) is about to be outmatched 10 to 1 by the king's 1,200,000 men with 200 scythe-bearing chariots (yet there will be only 900,000 in the end, when Arbocomas arrives late) (X. *An.* 1.7). The actual encounter with the royal army at Cunaxa is marked by signs of Greek piety ("Zeus the Savior and Victory" being the watchword, and a cry made to Enyalios, the war god, upon charging: X. *An.* 1.8.16 and 1.8.18). Cyrus boldly fights without a helmet and, though he wounds the king, his brother, Cyrus himself is hit under the eye with a javelin and is killed. The historian notably affords Cyrus a lengthy, eulogistic obituary (X. *An.* 1.9.1–31), which begins: "Cyrus came to his end, a man who was the most kingly and the most worthy to rule of all the Persians who have been born since Cyrus the Elder." He highlights the virtues of the great man: Cyrus, while hunting as a youth, killed a bear in a one-on-one fight (X. *An.* 1.9.8) and, as satrap of Lydia, he was favored by cities and individuals as one who could be trusted to help his friends and harm his enemies. By honoring highly those brave in war and by excelling in benefactions to friends, Cyrus made himself more widely loved than any man, Greek or barbarian, according to Xenophon (X. *An.* 1.9.28).

Some commentators have seen in the panegyric an apology from Xenophon for his joining the expedition: not only was Cyrus essentially good, but he cleverly manipulated the Greeks so as to make them help him, and did not reveal his true plan except to the Greek generals – who did not include Xenophon at that point (Rood 2005: xxiii–xxiv). Yet even cunning intelligence is a high virtue for the Greeks, and so we can both admire Cyrus and excuse Xenophon.

After his victory the Persian king savagely cuts off Cyrus' head and right hand, and the Greeks valiantly face Tissaphernes and his forces, sing the paean, and "advance to the attack more eagerly than before," with some initial success (X. *An.* 1.10.10). The Ten Thousand then debate whether to rally or surrender (X. *An.* 2.1). The king's ambassador comes with a demand for the Greeks to surrender in view of the odds, but the Greek leader Clearchus gives an ambiguous reply, saying that, "if we remain, there is a truce; if we retreat or advance, war" (X. *An.* 2.1.22). The Ten Thousand join Ariaeus; they make plans for a route to retreat from the king and agree to a withdrawal with Tissaphernes (X. *An.* 2.2–3). There are tensions between the Greeks and barbarians in the negotiations about surrender or unimpeded retreat, and in all

cases Clearchus is characterized as “a man of good sense” (*phronimos*). Clearchus “alone had the wisdom [*monos ephronei*] a commander should have, while the rest were without experience” (X. An. 2.2.6); Tissaphernes himself says to Clearchus: “It is a pleasure to hear your sensible words [*phronimous logous*]” (X. An. 2.5.16); and, in his obituary, he is said to remain “prudent” (*phronimos*) amid the terrors of war (X. An. 2.6.8).

In the event, when Clearchus and four other generals meet with Tissaphernes, the Persian has them all seized and executed. This is an occasion for reflecting at length on the careers and characters of three of the five men – more pointedly, an opportunity for the author to give his views on their strengths and weaknesses in leadership. Clearchus was, we learn, not only prudent, but a lover of war and a severe disciplinarian:

He was competent in figuring out how to get provisions and competent at impressing others that he must be obeyed ... He was gloomy in appearance and harsh in voice, and he used to punish severely, sometimes even in anger ... He used to say, it was reported, that a soldier must fear his commander more than the enemy.

(X. An. 2.6.8–10)

His one flaw may have been that, though a stern and able commander, he did not especially like being commanded by others (X. An. 2.6.15). The general Proxenus (Xenophon’s friend, who lured him on the expedition) was an educated and wealthy gentleman, but unable to inspire in soldiers respect or fear. A less able leader, Proxenus seems a more tragic figure, who could lead only the noble and principled individuals, while the dishonest plotted to manipulate him (X. An. 2.6.19–20). Menon, the general from Thessaly, is a paradigm of corruption and vice, reminiscent in content and vocabulary of the vicious pathology described in Thucydides’ account of *stasis* (Th. 3.82–3). Menon was eager for wealth and power, and so he increased his wealth to get honors and sought honors to gain greater wealth; he employed perjury, falsehood, and deceit to gain wealth and influence; he thought transparency and truth to be folly. The man with whom he was friends was the one against whom he was plotting. He managed soldiers through complicity in dishonesty (X. An. 2.6.21–7).

While the remaining books introduce some new thematic concerns related to expeditions through dangerous lands, they largely continue to explore the major motifs introduced in Books 1 and 2, leadership, pious respect for the divine role, the Greek–barbarian contrast, and the army as a microcosm of society or mirror of human nature. As leader, Xenophon himself of course gets the most coverage, while characters like Chirisophus, commander of the rearguard, is described only briefly throughout, for example in his brief speech at a meeting of the army (X. An. 3.2.1–3), in his praise of Xenophon for “words and deeds” that led the men to take action (X. An. 3.1.45), and in

Xenophon's single quarrel with him over a village chief who serves as a guide, is struck by Chirisophus, and then escapes (X. *An.* 4.6.3). Xenophon's self-introduction (X. *An.* 3.1.4–10), discussed earlier, links leadership with divine direction. In a lengthy prelude to Greek reorganization, a dream rouses Xenophon and prompts him to stir the other captains too, to denounce to Cyrus the Persians' cruelty and the Greeks' envy for Persian wealth, to refute other speakers, and to urge the captains to rise to leadership (X. *An.* 3.1.11–45). Prudence, timely intervention, well aimed argumentation, and advocacy of discipline and direction are highlighted as a leader's qualities. The Ten Thousand then take to the march, beating off Persian attacks and eventually heading to the mountains (X. *An.* 3.3–4).

The real *Odyssey*-like narrative begins in Book 4 with a march through the snowy Armenian mountains and includes a vivid account of suffering from hunger, snow blindness, and sickness, all countered by solutions found by Xenophon (X. *An.* 4.5). Xenophon holds the reader's attention through constant report, given dryly and without comment, of the foibles, ironic incidents, and tragedies of human nature. When Xenophon jokes with the Spartan Chirisophus about the latter's ethnic habit of "stealing" as an admirable skill and recommends that Chirisophus prove himself by "stealing" a bit of the mountain pass en route, the Spartan retorts that the best Athenians steal public money and are well regarded for this (X. *An.* 4.6.14–16). Yet the humorous repartee results in the two cooperating to "steal" the pass. At another point not far along, the two commanders again face on the hillsides enemies who throw or roll stones down on the soldiers. There ensues a "dreadful spectacle" when Xenophon has a plan to dodge the barrage, and all the rocks are used up. Women throw their children, then themselves, from the cliffs; finally the men throw themselves. Xenophon concludes with the trenchant comment: "In this stronghold only a very few human beings were captured, but they secured cattle and asses in large numbers and sheep" (X. *An.* 4.7.14). The incident also evidences a thematic disparagement of the barbarians against the clever, flexible strategy of the Greeks. The Ten Thousand later encounter "the most warlike of all people they passed through," the Chalybians and the Scythenians (X. *An.* 4.7.15–20), tribes that had a strange attire, cut off the heads of enemies and carried them on the march, and sang and danced when they met the enemy. Eventually the Ten Thousand arrive at Mount Theches, the first point overlooking the sea, where the soldiers famously erupt in joy with shouts of "The sea! The sea!" (*Thalatta, thalatta*) (X. *An.* 4.7.21–4). The collective nature of the enterprise is reflected also in a communal stock of booty, used in part to reward local guides (X. *An.* 4.7.27), and in the common sacrifice and games held when they reach the sea itself at Trapezus (X. *An.* 4.8).

Books 5–7 recount the growing disunity among the Greeks, problems with the local prince Seuthes, and the long trek along the sea and Propontis to

Pergamum. The conclusion of the journey still does not provide satisfying closure, Xenophon's fate and return to Greece being uncertain (Flower 2012: 106–12). Yet it does ensure that his account of the challenges of fate and of the enduring responses of men has been recorded: for him as for Odysseus, to memorialize honor is to secure glory. The conclusion also shows how, as a city on the march, a city of pan-Hellenic composition, the men descend to barbarity and infighting, which only Xenophon effectively curbs. Book 5 begins with discontent in the Greeks' assembly and a desire to rush onto ships and sail home, until Xenophon's more sober plan wins out – namely to work with local tribes to get provisions (X. *An.* 5.1.5–13). A fierce fight against the savage Drilae ensues as the Greeks seek provisions (X. *An.* 5.2.1–27), and Xenophon again saves the day, here with good strategy and aided by the divine: favorable seers, sacrifices, and a distracting fire “given by some god as a means of salvation” (X. *An.* 5.2.9 and 5.2.24). A discussion of funds acquired from the sale of booty gives rise to a digression on how Xenophon gave some to the gods and with others he later bought land and built his retirement home in Scillus – which was ordained by Apollo, paid annual tithes to Demeter, and contained a modest, sacred copy of the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus (X. *An.* 5.3.7–13). The devotion, though awkwardly intruding into the narrative, nevertheless records the historian's thoroughly sincere piety. He is eager to make a note of it, and here such a note seems more justified than elsewhere in his corpus. Xenophon next negotiates a *quid pro quo* arrangement with the Mossynoechians, to fight their enemies in return for safe passage (X. *An.* 5.4.1–29); the Mossynoechians were friendly, but the “most uncivilized” (*barbarōtatous*) people the Ten Thousand had met, doing private things in public and behaving oddly – which is reminiscent of the Odyssean adventures and, as mentioned above, inspires part of Apollonius of Rhodos' *Argonautica*. Xenophon then meets with a hostile embassy from Sinope and in an effective speech defuses the situation by standing firm but offering friendship (X. *An.* 5.5.13–23). After considering the possible settlement of some Greeks in this territory, Xenophon's speech unites the Greeks, seeking force in unity on the journey out (X. *An.* 5.6.28–33), and his next lengthy assembly speech defends his leadership and indicts Greek soldiers who take the law into their own hands (X. *An.* 5.7.5–33). Here comes also his elaborate defense (discussed earlier) of striking the mule driver (X. *An.* 5.8.2–8). In sum, Xenophon represents himself as enforcing order and justice among his men and toward local tribesmen. This is a virtual primitive laboratory setting, akin to that in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), testing the roots of human behavior and our ability to maintain dignity or to establish basic social conventions.

Book 6 opens with a feast for the Paphlagonian ambassadors to the Ten Thousand; the feast culminates in dances, including that of a female doing a Pyrrhic war dance (X. *An.* 6.1–13). A joke follows that the women are the ones who drove the king from his camp earlier (X. *An.* 1.10.2–3), which

effectively makes the point – recalling the Artemisia episode in Herodotus (Hdt. 7.89–99; Flower 2012: 184–6) – that even females are more warlike than the Persians. The Arcadians then propose that a single leader be chosen to allow swifter decisions and more profit for themselves, but piety based on omens, as well as good sense, leads Xenophon to decline the sole command of the forces. It goes instead to Chirisophus (X. *An.* 6.1.17–33), for only a week – until the Arcadians and Achaeans splinter off, while Chirisophus and Xenophon form two other groups (X. *An.* 6.2.16). Each heads off separately, until a near disaster for the Arcadians causes all to reunite (X. *An.* 6.3.1–26). When the Bithynian horsemen of Pharnabazus threaten the men, a long exhortation from Xenophon counsels the latter to fight rather than retreat, and for wise, strategic reasons (X. *An.* 6.5.14–21); Greek victory proves him right. Finally Xenophon again intervenes and defuses a possible conflict with Cleander, the Spartan governor from Byzantium (X. *An.* 6.6.31–4).

When, in Book 7, the Spartan admiral Anaxibius is persuaded by the Phrygian satrap Pharnabazus to usher out the army and take it across the Bosphorus by falsely promising to pay it off, only Xenophon's eloquence stops his men from running into a "mad" scheme to sack Byzantium in retribution (X. *An.* 7.1.25–31). Xenophon's reasoning is essentially that it is a hopeless cause to take on the whole Spartan superpower. His argument includes reflection about how even the empire of Athens fell against these peoples, "when we ruled over all the islands, and held the cities in Asia and others in Europe, including Byzantium" (X. *An.* 7.1.27). His men comply and avoid violence, while Xenophon at first sails off, but then returns when his men are duped and threatened by the new governor and admiral from Sparta. Rather than make a deal with the governor Aristarchus, Xenophon directs his men to accept a bargain and become mercenaries for the Thracian Seuthes (X. *An.* 7.2.10–3.14). Next follow lack of pay from Seuthes, corruption among some of the Ten Thousand, an offer from the Spartans for the soldiers to switch to a campaign against Tissaphernes, and accusations against Xenophon (X. *An.* 7.4–6). But Xenophon once more delivers a long speech defending his honesty and accusing the corrupt Greeks; this results in his departure with the troops to fight for Sparta against the Persians (X. *An.* 7.6.11–38). In the last long speech in the *Anabasis*, Xenophon argues for his men to be paid by Seuthes, saying that the Thracian got his kingdom for the price of the mercenaries – again affirming the theme of purchasable power (X. *An.* 7.7.20–47, esp. 25–6). If the last two speeches seem disproportionate within the narrative, it may be that the historian seeks to characterize himself, for the reader, as a man of Socratic wisdom and irony, one above venal aims and rather prizing, "especially for a man in power," "excellence, justice, and generosity" (X. *An.* 7.7.41). As often in Books 5–7, the central issues are more economic than political or military, as is expected in a mercenary context. In all the maneuvering among power blocs, Xenophon depicts himself as maintaining a consistent loyalty to and wise direction of the Ten

Thousand, even when they are near the journey's end.

The *Anabasis* cannot fairly be represented simply as the great heroic exploits of a mercenary army among Persians and sundry fierce barbarians. It is a story of survival, to be sure: it tells how the Greeks were duped into the expedition, then when the cause was lost, how they stuck together against the odds, and finally how they came apart when external pressures were less daunting. It is virtually a social experiment revealing the strengths and failings of human nature: how men released from conventional social structures can rebuild them, how a few display valor and selflessness, and how the majority require constant guidance (in this case, mainly from Xenophon) to stay the course, literally and figuratively. Power is still a driving force, leading Cyrus to try to gain Persia and Seuthes to seek his Thracian kingdom, but it is a tarnished force, more peripheral than in most histories, since money is not generally an honorable motivation, especially when patriotic fervor is absent from the subjects of the would-be monarch.

Hellenica

If the *Anabasis* is reminiscent of Herodotus' narrative of the Persian expeditions in reverse, as the Greeks threatening Persian hegemony, the *Hellenica* recalls Thucydides' discourse on the shifting of power among the Greeks. But the series of Greek conflicts in the fourth century resemble rather a series of complex scrimmages between teams of loose alliance than the mostly bipolar Athenian–Peloponnesian confrontation. Xenophon's long, meandering narrative is less unified than the texts of his two great predecessors, or even than his own *Anabasis*, yet it is arguably the most ambitious extant historical subject undertaken to that date. The degree to which Xenophon's account succeeds is another question; most recent scholars rate it as literarily less important, and with less evidence of formal or stylistic influence, than the *Anabasis*. Historians have also remarked on notable absences in the *Hellenica*, including the Second Athenian Confederacy, which some believe to be a deliberate omission designed to confound readers' expectations and to present an alternative view, in which the alliance played a lesser role; others see it as the author's despair at his native city's ineffective efforts (for the former, see Jehne 2004: 463–80; for the latter, see Badian 2004: 33–53). Nor does Xenophon make any mention, for instance, of Epaminondas' reestablishment of Messenian independence and of the foundation of Megalopolis as capital of the Achaean League. Scholars note the omissions and silences, with suggestions but without consensus as to possible bias behind them. We suspect they arise from lack of interest or fit with Xenophon's Peloponnesian focus rather than from ignorance of Athenian ambitions and actions (Cawkwell 1979: 35). Xenophon does not avoid

criticizing the Spartans (X. *Hell.* 5.4.1; 6.3.7–9) or even Agesilaus (X. *Hell.* 3.4.29; 5.4.24–34), or voicing appreciation for the skill of Epaminondas, Sparta's Theban foe (X. *Hell.* 7.5.8 and 19). His *Hellenica* was based on eyewitness events or events for which he had immediate sources, whence they received disproportionate treatment, as for instance the extended account of the trial of the generals after the battle of Arginusae (X. *Hell.* 1.7) and the lengthy account of the small town of Phlius (X. *Hell.* 7.2; sometimes spelled Phleious; see Cawkwell 1979: 43–4). He is also fond of personal anecdote and military strategy, though he presumably thought that these were vehicles for conveying important values or knowledge.

We cannot be certain about the dates of composition of sections of the *Hellenica*, but we may observe one plausible division into three sections with natural divisions, with possible dates of composition (Cawkwell 1979: 18):

- I. *Hellenica* 1.1.1–2.3.10, covering the end of the Peloponnesian War, 411–404 BC, after the part treated by Thucydides;
- II. *Hellenica* 2.3.11–5.1.36, from the close of the Peloponnesian War to the Peace of Antalcidas, 404–387 BC;
- III. *Hellenica* 5.2.1–7.5.27 (end), from the Peace of Antalcidas to the battle of Mantinea, 387–362 BC.

Section I may have been composed about 393 BC into the 380s BC, perhaps after Xenophon had settled at his Peloponnesian estate in Scillus; it cannot have been written before 401 BC and had to be started after 399 BC, that is, after the period of Xenophon's service, described in the *Anabasis*. Section II was possibly written 385–380 BC, after the Peace of Antalcidas, an event that may have inspired him to write this section, though the present consensus is that section II was composed late in his life, in the 350s BC. Section III may have been written late in Xenophon's career; *Hellenica* 6.4.37 alludes to an event in 358 or 357 BC, and the author died about 354 BC. The work was certainly written over several decades during the author's lifetime, in sections drafted between publication times of his other works. In part it emulates Thucydides' own choice of contemporary history, though it lacks the conceptual unity of that historian and the homogeneity of theme of a single great conflict. But the real achievement of the *Hellenica* is in its tracing of the success or failure of fellow Hellenes consistently to live up to the higher principles of their culture as Xenophon saw them.

Themes of the *Hellenica*

This work, like the *Anabasis*, lacks a proem or any overt statement on methodology. This is partly an act of authorial self-effacement from the continuator of Thucydides, but also an indication that the author lacked the

compelling narrative unity of a single great war and had no interest in imposing artificial theoretical structures on such an amorphous period, as Polybius did later for his subject. The leap straight into events belies Xenophon's subordination of philosophical or theological themes to the record of human events in a loosely causal relationship.

One scholar reasonably suggests that three major principles underlie Xenophon's *Hellenica*:

panhellenism and a very militarily oriented notion of perfect community life, both inspired by his time with the ten thousand Greek mercenaries; a belief that good leadership was the critical factor in determining the success of an army or polis; that the divine was an essentially provident force working for good in human history.

(Dillery 1995: 15)

These themes, in varying manifestations, were evident also in the *Anabasis* and obviously reflect the author's core interests in writing. Though Xenophon's conception of order may come from the world of the military, we must note the corollary that the properly functioning army, with its top-down chain of command, is similar to an oligarchic *polis*. There are hints at dissatisfaction with democracy, perhaps a legacy of Xenophon's Socratic ties, as manifest in his account of the arrest and execution of Theramenes (X. *Hell.* 2.3.15–56). Xenophon's politics and affection for good order in the military arose, one can argue, from a deep personal conviction, seen even in his other writing on estate management (the *Oeconomicus*). Xenophon presents models for good and bad city-states, utopias and dystopias – respectively Phlius (X. *Hell.* 7.2) and Athens under the Thirty (X. *Hell.* 2.3–4) (Dillery 1995: ch. 5). The Peloponnesian War resolved nothing with regard to the best form of state, to the political roles of citizens and non-citizens of various kinds of status, and to how interstate alliances function best in an equilibrium (Pomeroy et al. 1999: 330–1). The Greek states of the *Hellenica* are shown to be in a tension, seeking pragmatic solutions to these questions, as the author obliquely critiques error and valorizes heroic action.

Alongside the three thematic “principles” there is a focus on individuals and their character, which is in common with the focus in Herodotus and Thucydides: portraits of ethical virtue or vice are enacted, with the author's implicit praise or censure. Leaders in particular embody or personify the values of the Greeks – the scheming, the selfish, and the one who sacrifices himself for the good of the state. Paradigmatic are individual commanders, notably the Spartan Mnasippus, the Athenian Iphicrates, and Jason of Pherae (Dillery 1995: ch. 6). Xenophon certainly had both positive and critical points to make. Through the speeches of Callistratus and Procles in Book 6, Xenophon proposes to his contemporaries that Athens and Sparta should put an end to their mutual hostility and join in promoting a new type of empire,

“one based not on force, but on a reputation for fairness and generosity, and the respect and influence that come from such a reputation” (Dillery 1995: 248–9).

In addition, the theme of “power” is central to the narrative. With the vacuum left by the fall of Athens and the hovering threat of Persian hegemony, power among Greek states is a constant theme. In particular, it has been argued that the Theban speeches at *Hellenica* 3.5.8–15 have resonances with the Plataean debate in Thucydides (Th. 3.53–68; see Stanke 2006). In the Xenophon passage, the Theban ambassadors say that they did not support Sparta in its attack on the Piraeus; the Spartans treat free allies as slaves; there is a “double servitude” of states to the governors set up by Sparta and to the Committee of Ten set up by Lysander in each city. Take command, they urge Athens, since the Spartan empire is more vulnerable as a land-based one than your sea-based empire was:

For at that time when you held dominion [*ērchete*] you were the leaders, you recall, of those only who dwelt on the sea; but now you would become the leaders [*hēgemones*] of all alike – of ourselves, of the Peloponnesians, of those whom you formerly ruled [*ērchete*], and of the King himself with his vast empire.

(X. *Hell.* 3.4.14)

Empires are forever, seems to be the implication, only the hegemony changes. Yet the Thebans themselves use a rhetoric of overt flattery to their own advantage, and against the obvious arguments that Athens suffered setbacks because of Thebes in the past. Xenophon, by direct allusion to the Thucydidean passage on Thebes and indeed to Thucydides’ general discourse on power, suggests that the role of the imperial state has shifted from Athens to Sparta; but the dynamics of power remain in which smaller city-states appeal to bigger ones regardless of traditional cultural alliances. In short, Xenophon, at least in part, has inherited Thucydides’ view that states typically abandon the “ancient simplicity” in favor of a pragmatic, sophistic rhetoric to maintain or acquire rule over others. It is noteworthy that the Thucydidean model persists in Xenophon’s analysis even after the fall of Athens, in complex ways (Rood 2004b: 341–95). Xenophon’s solution, as above, may be an overly optimistic hope that Athens and Sparta should jointly share a more peaceful type of power among the Greeks while resisting the manipulation of the non-Greeks.

Narrative of the *Hellenica*

A brief synopsis of the events of the period will help contextualize the narrative, which is required more here than in earlier works owing to the

greater complexity of the events. Thucydides' Book 8 recounts the political turnabouts in 411 BC: the collapse of Athenian democracy and the imposition of an oligarchy called the Four Hundred, which, due to internal factions, was replaced by a broader oligarchy, the Five Thousand, which soon, in turn, lapsed again into full democracy. After this, in the summer of 411 BC, the Athenian fleet won a signal victory over the Spartans at the battle of Kynossema in the Propontis, thanks to Alcibiades' help.

At this point Xenophon takes up the last seven years of the Peloponnesian War, which continues in seesaw battles primarily on the coast of Asia Minor. Despite the Athenians' victory under Alcibiades' leadership at Cyzicus on the Hellespont in 410 BC, he is dismissed. Persia, led by Cyrus, son of King Darius II, supports Sparta, and the Spartan admiral Lysander beats the Athenian navy decisively at Aegospotami, also on the Propontis, in 405 BC. After a long siege Lysander eventually brings Athens to surrender in 404 BC. Lysander installs a group called the Thirty, which, under the extremist Critias, executes the moderate Theramenes and initiates a period of political civil strife. Sparta forces a reconciliation between the armed band of Thrasybulus that had taken the port of Piraeus and the oligarchs in the city. In 403 BC democracy is restored in Athens.

Sparta then steps into the leadership vacuum caused by Athens' fall – much to the unease of Athens, Thebes, and Corinth. At this point Persia, led by the new king, Artaxerxes II, thinks it wiser to support the anti-Spartan forces (a move occasioned by the attempt of Cyrus, his Spartan-allied brother, to overthrow him) and to lessen the danger of another unified Greek resistance. In any case these are the decades of Persia switching Greek sides several times, presumably to play the Greeks against one another. Corinth, Athens, and Thebes unite to fight Sparta in the so-called Corinthian War (395–386 BC); the Athenian Conon wins a decisive victory at Cnidus in 394 BC. Artaxerxes dictates the terms of the treaty among the Greeks – the King's Peace of 386 BC. Spartan power is maintained after this, Sparta conquering Olynthus and then occupying Thebes in 382 BC. Athens and Thebes oppose Sparta once more in the Boeotian War (378–371 BC, with a brief peace in 375/4). Athens forms a Second Athenian League as a new naval alliance, and Thebes reunifies Boeotia. Artaxerxes again intervenes with a peace treaty in 372/1 BC, again favoring Sparta, after which the Theban Epaminondas deals a stunning defeat to the Spartan Cleombrotus at Leuctra in the summer of 371 BC.

At this stage Sparta is in decline and Thebes is on the rise. In 369 BC Thebes restores to independence Messenia, a region in the Southwestern Peloponnese long under Sparta. Megalopolis on the Northern border of Sparta is supported by Thebes against the threat of renewed Spartan empowerment. Athens allies itself with Sparta in 369–367 BC, to thwart Theban hegemony, and also attempts, through its league, to besiege Amphipolis (in 368 BC and after), to

put colonists at Samos, and to campaign elsewhere for its own benefit. Athens and Sparta fight Thebes effectively to a draw at Mantinea in 362 BC, an episode ending with the death of the great Theban Epaminondas. Athens makes peace with all other Greek states, including Messenia, but not with Sparta after that battle. Though Xenophon's account ends with the death of Epaminondas, he was likely writing until 353 BC – that is, into a period (362–353 BC) that saw the rebellion of Athens' allies, the further weakening of Athens, and the demise of Theban hegemony in a war against its neighbor Phocis, which was allied with Sparta (this was the Third Sacred War, begun in 356 BC). The collective debilitation of states in Central Greece and the Peloponnese opened the way for Macedon to rise to power under Phillip II in the 350s and following.

Xenophon's Peloponnesian War narrative in Books 1 and 2 is in a more sparse and chronologically straightforward, "analytic" style than the sections on later history were; for instance animal sacrifices made by armies and navies prior to battle are omitted by Xenophon, as by Thucydides, in the account of the Peloponnesian War, but they are a regular feature of the later narrative. Also Books 3 and the following are richer in characterization and dramatic use of speeches. The dating of the respective "sections" of the work was discussed above. The stylistic differences and the comment about the beginning of Greek freedom suggest that the first narrative originally ended at 2.2.23 (discussed further below; see also Thomas 2009: xxxii–xxxiv).

Several early stories emphasize character and pointed role changing in the struggles for power. An Athenian leader, Thrasyllus, ironically captures Alcibiades, a cousin of the famous Alcibiades, among the Syracusans at Lesbos and sees him stoned to death (X. *Hell.* 1.2); Thrasyllus then joins forces with the general Alcibiades. The Persians delay for three years the Athenian ambassadors seeking peace (X. *Hell.* 1.4; 407 BC). Three generals are elected at Athens, including Alcibiades, who is praised upon his return, though the timing – during the Plynteria festival – is ill omened. Xenophon, following Thucydides, recalls that Alcibiades was originally exiled due to a questionable charge of profaning the Mysteries: "because of the intrigues of people inferior to him ... their only political principle was self-interest" (X. *Hell.* 1.4.11–16; cf. Th. 6.60–1). A dramatic scene shows Alcibiades standing apprehensively on the deck of his ship upon first arriving, then being received by family, and finally making speeches in the assembly and the Council in his own defense. The assembly makes him supreme commander: "He was chosen general with supreme authority [*autokratōr*] over the other generals as it was thought [by the assembly] that he was the man who had the authority to reestablish the former power [*dunamin*] of Athens" (X. *Hell.* 1.4.20). Not long after, in 406 BC, the Athenian navy loses a battle and fifteen triremes at Notium, near Ephesus; the Athenians became angry (*chalepōs eichon*) with Alcibiades for that loss through his "negligence and lack of power," in a scene

reminiscent again of that at Thucydides 6.61.1, in which the Athenians were also angry (*chalepōs elambanon*) with him. Xenophon echoes the earlier criticism of the unreasoned emotion of the crowd against a good commander.

Xenophon also notes some dissent in the Spartan camp by portraying Callicratidas as an independent naval leader, unlike his predecessor Lysander, who was overly dependent on the patronage of the Persians (X. *Hell.* 1.6). Before Callicratidas defeats the Athenians at Arginusae, he famously tells Conon “I will stop your fornicating with the sea,” implying that Sparta is the sea’s proper husband (X. *Hell.* 1.6.15). But the real dramatic focus in this section is on Athenian infighting in the debate of the Athenian generals. From this Euryptolemus emerges as an advocate of fair and reasoned deliberation, not emotional fault finding. A storm prevents the generals from collecting the stranded (X. *Hell.* 1.7.16–32), and Euryptolemus’ sage advice is countered by a vote by those truly guilty. The outcome is the execution of six Athenians, which those who voted soon regret; this recalls the remorse of the Athenians in the decisions over Mytilene or after Pylos (Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.35; cf. Th. 3.36.1 and 5.14.2). Xenophon, like Thucydides, sees fault in the emotion of the assembly versus the wisdom of certain leaders; these represent two sides of human nature. The Arginusae affair becomes, from Xenophon onwards, a paradigm for the fickleness of democracy or mob rule.

Then follows the Athenian loss at Aegospotami against the forces of Lysander based at Lampsachus in the Hellespont. Here Xenophon points up two ironies. The Athenians might have avoided the loss if they had followed the advice of the disempowered Alcibiades, and a debate over the punishment and execution of Athenian survivors is carried out this time by the Spartans (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.25–6 and 31–2). The Athenians are portrayed as ever more brutal, in stories of their plans to cut off the hands of live Spartan captives and of throwing overboard the crews from ships from Corinth and Andros.

Now under siege, the Athenians “thought there was no salvation except to suffer the same things they had inflicted, injustices they did not in retaliation, but out of wanton violence [*hubris*] against men of small cities for no other single reason than that they were in alliance with the Spartans” (X. *Hell.* 2.2.10). As in Herodotus, Thucydides, epic, and drama, there operates a scheme of suffering ultimately repaying unwarranted aggression, which is more evident here than elsewhere in Xenophon. When news of the defeat arrives in Athens, the Athenians fear suffering the same fate as others whom they had treated harshly, including Melians, Histiaeans, Scionians, Toronians, and Aeginetans. An extended debate over whether to pull down the city walls precedes the final act of doing so (X. *Hell.* 2.2.11–23). The focus on walls reminds readers of their crucial importance in fifth-century empire building, how the walls went up against the Persians despite Peloponnesian disapproval, and how they symbolize the last bulwark of a naval state. “After this Lysander sailed into Piraeus, the exiles returned, and the Peloponnesians

with great enthusiasm began to tear down the walls to the music of flute-girls, thinking that that day was the beginning of freedom for Greece" (X. *Hell.* 2.2.23). The comment is more a bridge to what is to come than a note of closure. The Peloponnesian perspective does bring the reader full circle to Archidamus' utterance at the very start of the war, in 431 BC: "This day is the beginning of great evils for the Greeks" (Th. 2.12.3; cf. Hom. *Il.* 5.63; Hdt. 5.97.3; Ar. *Pax* 435). But the release from Athenian imperialism is not the release from evils, or even from Greeks oppressing Greeks, and the Peloponnesian enthusiasm is to be seen ironically in view of the sufferings in the subsequent narrative.

When the government of the Thirty is set up in Athens, there are internal disputes among its members and an oligarchy of the Three Thousand is established, which includes members of the elite (*kaloi kai agathoi*) to be "associated with" the government (X. *Hell.* 2.3). The arms of all but the Three Thousand are confiscated, many citizens and resident aliens are put to death, and property is used to pay the Spartan garrison. In a subsequent debate, Critias represents a harsh element motivating execution and confiscation, while Theramenes, accused of treason and seen as changing sides often, eloquently defends himself: the ones putting the innocent to death are the traitors; "you call me a flip-flop [*kothornos*, litt. "stage boot"], trying to please both sides. But what, by the gods, do you call someone who pleases neither party?" (X. *Hell.* 2.3.47). Theramenes favors neither an extremist democracy nor a tyrannical oligarchy, but "government in the company of men who can be of use, whether cavalry or hoplite class," that is, the wealthy or middle class (X. *Hell.* 2.3.48). In the event Critias condemns Theramenes to death, fearing his potential popularity, and, without proper trial under the Thirty, Theramenes is first brutalized by a gang of ruffians called "the Eleven," then forced to drink hemlock, which he does while coolly joking at Critias' expense. While the politically flexible Theramenes is certainly not Socrates, his nobility in death and facing up to the brutality of his peers is meant to offer one admirable model for the politically engaged. The resolution comes in the stories of Thrasybulus fighting Critias in the Piraeus with an army of 1,000; of the rout of the Thirty; and of the end of this civil war in Athens (X. *Hell.* 2.4). The heroic figure is Cleocritus, a herald of those initiated in the mysteries of Demeter, who calls for an end to dissent and persecution in the name of the common gods, common ancestry, and bonds of friendship (X. *Hell.* 2.4.20–2). After the Thirty are removed from office and a government of the Ten (based on the ten tribes of Attica) is set up, the Spartan king Pausanias marches on Athens to stabilize the factions of the Thirty there (X. *Hell.* 2.4.29). The Athenian Thrasybulus, discouraging lawlessness, addresses the assembly, which restores a form of democracy.

Book 3 covers the death of King Cyrus (401 BC), the Elean War of the Spartan king Agis II (c. 402–400 BC), and the death of Agis and succession of

Agesilaus, a crucial figure in Xenophon's narrative. Agesilaus' holding of the throne is bolstered by a (disputed) reading of an oracle and protected by a seer's revelations against a conspiracy. Agesilaus plans an ambitious campaign in Asia (396–395 BC), encouraged in part by Xenophon's mercenary venture (X. *Hell.* 3.4.2) and playing out the old Greek–Asian hostility. Agesilaus' sacrifice at Aulis recalls Agamemnon's en route to Troy and puts the Spartan in a heroic tradition. The sacrifice is unceremoniously scuttled by the Boeotians, whom Agesilaus curses for their impiety (X. *Hell.* 3.4.3–4). Finally in Ephesus, Agesilaus tells the Persian Tissaphernes that he seeks autonomy for the cities of Asia; and he deftly brings about a truce despite the mutual lack of trust (X. *Hell.* 3.4.5–6). The inevitable military clash at Daskyleion (396 BC) results in Agesilaus' retreat and renewed attacks against Sardis the following year (X. *Hell.* 3.4.13–26). The Persian king, aiming to place Greeks against Greeks to his benefit, sends money to Thebes, Corinth, and Argos, but pointedly not to Athens, which is eager to fight Sparta, perhaps thinking that it would regain its empire (X. *Hell.* 3.5.2, though the text here is corrupt). This Persian playing the Greeks off one another is a leitmotif of the *Hellenica*, and undoubtedly an active concern of the era. Greek internal strife fostered by Persia is the main thread of this book with events leading into the Corinthian War (395–387 BC). When Thebes foments conflict between Locris and Phocis, Phocis seeks Sparta's help, and Theban ambassadors appeal for help at Athens in a significant speech (X. *Hell.* 3.5.8–15), which suggests that this alliance is one way for Athens to regain its empire. This speech was discussed above as alluding to Thucydides and to the notion of the perpetuation of empires. Xenophon implies that Athens' continued imperial ambitions are no secret to the Greeks, nor is there any special shame in this ambition from the Theban perspective: if someone must have an empire, that had better be Athens than Sparta. Athens supports Thebes, which prevails against the Spartans at Haliartus. Xenophon carefully explains the good reasons for the Spartan withdrawal under King Pausanias, who is then convicted in absentia of a capital offense and sentenced to death. The author implicitly disapproves of the Spartan judicial reasoning and approves of the misjudged and valiant king, who dies of an illness after fleeing (X. *Hell.* 3.5.17–25).

Book 4 further highlights the character of Agesilaus and delineates Spartan campaigns at Coronea, Corinth, and Argos and at sea (395–389 BC). Agesilaus' diplomatic skill and shrewdness are illustrated in the lengthy narrative of his engineering of a marriage between the daughter of the disaffected Persian Spithridates and the Paphlagonian king Otys (4.1.3–15), a section notably given only five lines in the corresponding text of the Oxyrhynchus historian (Fr. 25). Agesilaus accomplishes the aim of having the two go against the Persian Pharnabazus. The Spartan's negotiations with Pharnabazus and with his son again illustrate his deft fostering of personal friendships with both – which includes assisting the son's Athenian beloved to

be judged eligible to run in the stade race at the Olympics (X. *Hell.* 4.1.40). The winning and maintaining of friendships are finely negotiated arts that Xenophon values. Agesilaus is recalled to help at home and marches through Thessaly, while the Spartan forces win a battle against Corinthian allied troops at the Nemea River. Agesilaus' courage and piety are illustrated by his head-on attack against the foe at Coronea and by his dedication of a tenth of the booty from the battle of Coronea to Delphi (X. *Hell.* 4.3.18–21). Next, civil strife in Corinth recalls the Corcyrean strife at Thucydides 3.82–3, where the dominant pro-war faction persecutes those seeking peace by staging a massacre in the marketplace on the day of a festival of Artemis Euclea: “the conspirators, utterly sacrilegious and without so much as a single thought for civilized usage ... kept up the slaughter even at holy places” (X. *Hell.* 4.4.3). Thus warmongering, murder, and impiety are fostered by the fervor at Corinth and condemned by the historian. The portrait of an oppressive world of inverted ethics, as in Thucydides' passage, is made: “[persecuted citizens] saw, however, that those who were in power were ruling like tyrants, and perceived that their state was being put out of existence, inasmuch as boundary stones had been removed and their fatherland was called Argos instead of Corinth” (X. *Hell.* 4.4.6). Fierce fighting ensues around and in Corinth, with fluctuating success by each side; the city walls are dismantled, repaired, and then held by Agesilaus. The Athenians inflict a heavy loss of 250 Spartans in action at the Corinthian port of Lechaeum (X. *Hell.* 4.5.16–18). The sacred Isthmian Games of 390 BC become a pawn in the war, first hosted by the occupying Agesilaus with disaffected Corinthians, then reheld by the anti-Spartan Argives (X. *Hell.* 4.5.1–2). Agesilaus next takes the war to Achaernania in Western Central Greece and adds this region's inhabitants as allies (X. *Hell.* 4.6.1–7.1), then invades Argos after getting favorable oracles from Delphi and Olympia and the omen of an earthquake (X. *Hell.* 4.7.2–7). The gods seem to favor the Spartan king. The sea war in Asia Minor rounds out the book, which is marked by episodes illustrating leadership qualities and the jockeying for Persian favor. Notable leaders include Dercylidas, the effective Spartan governor of Abydos and an agent of Agesilaus, who rouses the people to resist the siege mounted by Pharnabazus and the Athenian Conon (X. *Hell.* 4.8.3–5); the enterprising Spartan Diphridas, who collects a ransom to hire mercenaries (X. *Hell.* 4.8.21–2); and the Athenian Thrasylbulus, “esteemed a good man,” who wins at Methymna and Aspendus, yet tragically dies at the hands of locals angry at the soldiers' plundering (X. *Hell.* 4.8.25–31). Spartan fear of Athenian power, a major motif in Thucydides' narrative, has become a rhetorical cliché, but an effective one, used here by the Rhodians to convince the Spartans to come to their aid, lest Athens “acquire such great power” by making Rhodes an ally (X. *Hell.* 4.8.20). Tellingly, Xenophon points out that “both [Athenian and Spartan] parties were acting in this affair in a manner absolutely opposed to their own interests,” by aiding others who were at odds with them over their relation to

the Persian king (X. *Hell.* 4.8.24). The dynamic of Greek relations with Persia overshadows the relative might of the Greek states themselves, as we see in the stories of Conon's procuring Persian money to rebuild the walls at Athens and of the Spartan Antalcidas failing to turn the Persian king against Athens (X. *Hell.* 4.8.9–17). The book ends with the brave death of the Spartan Anaxibius at Abydus, here a death at the hands of fellow Greeks. Anaxibius is ambushed by Athenian forces and dies along with his young lover, twelve local governors, and two hundred of his men (X. *Hell.* 4.8.39). Anaxibius' bravery is partly reminiscent of Leonidas' stand at Thermopylae; he is otherwise not especially heroic, but may be redeemed by a good death.

Prominent in Book 5 is the Spartan admiral Teleutias. He is remarkable, Xenophon says, for winning the true affection and affectionate gestures of his men when he relinquishes command at Aegina (X. *Hell.* 5.1.3–4). He later returns to Aegina and in a speech encourages endurance and bravery and plays down material rewards, words echoing Xenophon's sentiments (X. *Hell.* 5.1.14). Then he leads a bold raid on the Piraeus, which sends the Athenians into a panic and produces enough booty for a month's pay for his sailors (X. *Hell.* 5.1.19–24). Xenophon then reports the King's Peace – termed “the Peace of Antalcidas” in honor of the Spartan negotiator, but mainly brokered by the Persian monarch – highlighting the Spartan role and downplaying the Persian. The treaty benefits Sparta most, as the overseer of the agreement (X. *Hell.* 5.1.31–6; 386 BC). Next Sparta intervenes in Mantinea and Phlius (385–384 BC) and attacks Olynthus to help Thebes, while the Theban Leontidas allows the Spartan Phoebidas to occupy his city's citadel, the Cadmeia, amid factional Theban strife that benefits Sparta (X. *Hell.* 5.2). Sparta is spurred on by a speech of ambassadors from cities near Olynthus who repeatedly warn about the power of Olynthus becoming great: “For the deity, perhaps, has so ordered it that men's pride should increase with their power” (X. *Hell.* 5.2.18), a lesson echoing Herodotus. At the siege of Olynthus the otherwise praiseworthy Teleutias becomes angry at the enemy's success, makes a strategic blunder, and causes a defeat that costs his own and many others' lives. Men learn from such sufferings, Xenophon moralizes, that anger is costly: “to attack under the influence of anger and not with judgment is an absolute mistake. For anger does not look ahead, while judgment has in view no less avoiding suffering than causing harm to the enemy” (X. *Hell.* 5.3.7, adapted). Abbreviated narratives of a subsequent siege of Olynthus end in its surrender and alliance with Sparta (X. *Hell.* 5.3.8–9, 18–19, and 26), giving greater focus to Agesilaus and his balanced treatment of the people of Phlius in the Peloponnese (X. *Hell.* 5.3.10–17 and 20–5). Next there is at Sparta a trial of Sphodrias, the Spartan governor of the city of Thespieae, who invaded Attica without orders to do so. Sphodrias is scandalously acquitted because his son is the beloved of Agesilaus' son (X. *Hell.* 5.4.20–3). Agesilaus successfully argues for his pardon if he did wrong. Sphodrias' death at Leuctra, in the great Theban victory over Sparta seven years later, underscores

his devotion to the state. The extensive narrative of this rather inconsequential event reveals the historian's concern with ethics and its broader consequences. Agesilaus' martial prowess is further demonstrated by his successfully threatening and harassing Theban residents (X. *Hell.* 5.4.47–54).

Book 6 then shifts to Polydamas of Pharsalus in Thessaly, an honorable and honest leading citizen there. He speaks at Sparta (X. *Hell.* 6.1.4–16) and calls Jason of Pherae “a man of great power and fame” (X. *Hell.* 6.1.4). Polydamas had been threatened by Jason of Pherae after making a treaty with him. Jason applies power politics, saying in essence that he has many allies and could defeat Polydamas; but it is better to make allies willingly, through persuasion, rather than by force (X. *Hell.* 6.1.7). Jason is made a tyrant figure, while Sparta is also warned that, if it does not ally itself with Pharsalus, Athens will do so (X. *Hell.* 6.1.10; see Sprawski 2004: 437–52). Yet in the end Sparta does not agree to help Polydamas, and he returns home to become subject to Jason (X. *Hell.* 6.1.17–19). “All cities fear where the power [*dunamis*] of this man will lead,” Polydamas warns (X. *Hell.* 6.1.14). An appeal to Greek power politics is added to the moral and legal issues. Action in the west, at Corcyra, pivots on an attack of the island by the Spartan Mnasippus, his death in battle, and the able leadership of the Athenian general Iphicrates. The Athenian controls his own men, captures a Syracusan flotilla in the area, and earns Xenophon's praise for his being “neither dilatory nor careless ... [but] a man of supreme self-confidence” (X. *Hell.* 6.2). Mnasippus and Iphicrates represent, for Xenophon, two contrasting models of leadership (Dillery 1995: ch. 6; Krafft 1967).

The Athenians send ambassadors to Sparta to seek peace, two speakers pointing out Sparta's imperialist acquisitiveness (*pleonexia*), its demanding justice from others but its seizing for itself (X. *Hell.* 6.3): “we have all learned that selfish gain is without profit, and we will be more moderate in our mutual friendship” (X. *Hell.* 6.3.9, 11). Through the embassy, the historian implies that Sparta's blunt acquisitiveness and its failure in reciprocity make its empire unattractive to potential allies and untenable to the subordinate.

The battle at Leuctra that follows shows a less than competent (and possibly drunken) Spartan general, Cleombrotus, facing the superior tactician Epaminondas and the Sacred Band of Thebes under the formidable Pelopidas. Divine oracles and portents predict the Theban success, as Xenophon typically notes (X. *Hell.* 6.4.7). The defeat of Sparta and the loss of hundreds of citizen warriors open the way for Epaminondas and the Thebans to invade Spartan territory (though not the city of Sparta) within a year, for the first time ever. Epaminondas establishes the new cities of Messene and Megalopolis, power bases in the Peloponnese that ensured that Sparta would never again rise to its previous superpower status (Cartledge 2009: 262–3). Jason of Pherae then emerges as a diplomatic hero, “the greatest man of his time in not being disparaged by anyone” (X. *Hell.* 6.4.28), dissuading the Thebans from

further fighting and arranging a treaty with the Spartans. In a hybriatic manner, Jason arranges a more splendid than ever Pythian festival at Delphi, making himself director of the festival and games (X. *Hell.* 6.4.21–31). When, soon after, Jason is assassinated by seven youths, the culprits are praised by most Greek cities, since they feared Jason as a tyrant – tyrannicide being a venerable theme in historical writing (X. *Hell.* 6.4.31). After the Spartan Agesilaus leads an abortive attack on Arcadia and Mantinea and then retreats home (X. *Hell.* 6.5.4–21), the Argives and others persuade the Thebans to attack Laconia, skirmishing at Amyklæ (X. *Hell.* 6.5.22–32). Next, Spartan envoys at Athens try to persuade it to become Sparta's ally against Thebes and the effort is almost stymied, but the day is saved by the Athenian Procles, whose long oration uses appeals to tradition (Thermopylae), to justice, and, most forcefully, to self-interest (X. *Hell.* 6.5.38–48). The speech is squarely in the tradition of Diodotus' arguments in Thucydides' Mytilenean debate, and the attention paid is revealing of Xenophon's interest and approval (was he there?), even if the consequences are minimal.

Procles' eloquence again proves effective at the beginning of Book 7, in a debate over leadership of the Athenian–Spartan alliance, though the result is joint command – a sign of the weakened position of both states (X. *Hell.* 7.1.1–14). Thebes once more attacks target cities in the Peloponnese, with mixed results in Corinth and Arcadia (X. *Hell.* 7.1.15–32). We saw how the Thebans tried to court Athens by praising its empire just after it had fallen (X. *Hell.* 3.5.8–15). In Book 7 the Thebans and Pelopidas make an inept attempt to build their own power base (*hēgemonia*; see Sterling 2004: 453–62, esp. 456–8). They first court the Persian king to gain favor over Athens and Sparta, and then they require potential allies to swear an oath, which all cities refuse (X. *Hell.* 7.1.40). When Epaminondas, their one competent leader, starts to gather Achaean support, fellow Thebans distrust him and scuttle the one point of progress. The Thebans are shown to be simply inept at establishing an extensive hegemony, and even at recognizing excellent leadership. Epaminondas brings Sicyon to the Theban side (X. *Hell.* 7.1.41–6), but the city of Phlius stays bravely loyal to Sparta and, with Athens' help, repels the Thebans and their Argive and Arcadian allies (X. *Hell.* 7.2.1–15). The Phliasian narrative glows with the historian's approval of the city's valor and values generally (X. *Hell.* 7.2.16–23). The seesaw Arcadian–Eleian War erupts with Sparta aiding Elis, until, at the 104th Olympics in 364 BC, the Eleians attack the Argives. The latter (with dubious authority) have usurped the organization of the Games, which results in an unprecedented and unholy armed battle in the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia (X. *Hell.* 7.4.28–32). Factional tactics lead up suspensefully, with a near siege of Sparta by Epaminondas (X. *Hell.* 7.5.8–14), to the great battle of Mantinea in 362 BC. In the event, Epaminondas' strategy is impeccable, but his luck is against him: "either the divinity was responsible, or no one can withstand desperate men," Xenophon concludes (X. *Hell.* 7.5.12). The Thebans thought that victory

would make up for all prior mistakes, while his death would be a glorious end; “such are the thoughts of ambitious men,” says the historian (X. *Hell.* 7.5.19).

The aspirations of the man who led the troops and inspired the state here represent the people’s ambitions as well. The work ends after Mantinea, without a neat rounding off, and, appropriately after an indecisive battle, with insight into the complexity of the human motives of a leader and with the waning of Thebes’ imperial aspirations. Xenophon eloquently breaks off – “Perhaps someone else will be concerned with what happens after this” (X. *Hell.* 7.5.27) – handing the torch to another, as Thucydides did to him. “There are *no* heroes in the *Hellenica* – or none that last for very long,” opines one scholar, adding: “The search for power [by states] is a common feature ... So is the failure to secure it ... It is the fundamental aim to become or return to being ‘the greatest’ ... that causes the trouble and will lead to no good, however efficient one is” (Tuplin 1993: 165–6). Without the closure of the *Anabasis* or other works’ focus on a single war, why did Xenophon write *Hellenica*? Some say that it defends Sparta, or indicts Thebes, or endorses a joint rule by Sparta and Athens; but no single thesis accounts for the whole content. Rather, one may argue, the reason was the challenge laid down by Herodotus and Thucydides, their chronicles of power, and the human elements in its quest. Yet without restraint Xenophon also put his own imprint on the narrative. He completed the narrative of Thucydides and, like his compatriot, undertook to chronicle similar great conflicts of his time in the wake of a great war. He could have told a different, more unified narrative, of how liberty abided for each city-state and no single imperial power held sway. But a dramatic arc was not falsely imposed, and history was rather drawn as a series of episodes and as a reflection of character and of the shifting of power. The work conveys the presence, and often the absence, of Xenophon’s prized virtues: civic devotion, moral integrity, leadership, and piety (Hobden and Tuplin 2012).

Conclusions

Xenophon’s two major historical works present different paradigms of conflicts and shifting power. While the *Anabasis* can be seen to focus more directly on issues of leadership and divine providence in a neatly unified narrative, the *Hellenica* witnesses the fluctuation of hegemony among major Greek states (and Persia) in a veritable multisided chess game, with the dissolution of Athens, the rise, dominance, and decline of Sparta, and the new power of Thebes. Rule is managed in turn by key leaders – Agesilaus, Jason, Epaminondas, and others.

Xenophon’s representation of power reflects the new realities of the ever

shifting hegemony in the fourth century, the absence of “superpowers” like those operating during the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars. But the analysis of power is also supplemented by the more focal role of divine intervention. We witness, for example, the powerlessness of those who fail to pick up the dead and dying after the battle of Arginusae, an event attributed to divine fate:

Do not, men of Athens ... act like men who are beaten and unfortunate, nor, in the face of heaven’s visitation, show yourselves unreasonable by giving a verdict of treachery instead of helplessness [*adunamias*], since they found themselves unable on account of the storm to do what they had been ordered to do.

(X. *Hell.* 1.7.33)

Such is the view of Euryptolemus, ending a speech designed to evoke understanding for those on trial for leaving their dead behind. Both historical works therefore pick up from predecessors the subject matter and the treatment of human agents who seek hegemony, but weave into them the explicit praise of traditional Greek values and a constant reminder of the role of divinity behind the scenes – a reminder characteristic of Xenophon and reminiscent of Herodotus.

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5

History and Rhetoric in Fourth-Century Historians

The vigorous and volatile period following the Peloponnesian War and prior to the advent of Alexander the Great was a fertile era for an evolution in the approaches to history and for a multiplication of writers. Hundreds of them are listed in Felix Jacoby's fundamental collection of the fragments of Greek historians (with commentary), started in 1923, and in its twenty-first-century version, updated with English translations – *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (FGrHist) and *Brill's New Jacoby* (BNJ), respectively. In the Greek world the shifting nature of political power between Sparta, Thebes, Athens, and other Greek cities – states often manipulated by Persia and broadly mapped by Xenophon – provided fertile ground for chroniclers who took one side or the other in the telling. We regret the fact that few survived beyond the tantalizing glimpses in Jacoby – texts preserved mostly by later historians who used them as sources, but also indirect testimonials culled from references in other authors and partial texts preserved on papyri in Egypt. Yet the paucity of texts is not evidence of their inferiority to Xenophon; they were favored by later rhetorical stylists involved in the revival of Attic Greek. Ancient references suggest that Theopompus and Ephorus shared the rank of Xenophon. The genres included local chronicles continued from the classical period, biography, and ethnography. In addition to the broadening cultural perspectives and flowering of styles, the fourth century BC – the century of these authors – is usually also characterized by its increasing moralization (overt value judgments of persons), and by its close connections to ever more refined rhetorical methods. Rhetoric shaped the style and form of historiography, but the content followed its own paths of refinement. Of course moralizing and rhetoric were present since the advent of historical writing, indeed intrinsic to Greek literature since Homer. What makes this period different are the shifting forms of moral assessment and of rhetorical strategies.

History and Representation

Herodotus and Thucydides were, as we have seen, keenly interested in exploring the motives of historical agents; they were more oblique in representing them, perhaps influenced by contemporary drama and, to an

extent, by epic and lyric modes of character portrayal. The late fifth and the fourth century saw the rich elaboration and adoption of two literary and cultural developments, namely philosophy in the wake of Socrates and rhetoric after the Sophists. Space does not permit an adequate analysis of these genres, but some brief comments will remind us of the need to see historical writing in its intellectual context. We should first say that, although there are no extant fourth-century theoretical discussions of any length regarding history as a genre, Aristotle's often quoted dictum, from [chapter 9](#) of his *Poetics*, is the closest we get to theory:

Poetry is both more philosophical and more serious than history, since poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars. A “universal” comprises the kind of speech or action which belongs by probability or necessity to a certain kind of character ... A “particular,” by contrast, is (for example) what Alcibiades did or experienced.

(Arist. *Po.* 9, 1451^{b6}–12, Halliwell 1987)

Aristotle, writing sometime between the 360s and the 320s, presents an extreme contrast (perhaps deliberately exaggerated to make his point) between genres – a contrast that ancient historians themselves would have disputed, since those authors likely felt that their narratives had broader philosophical importance and applicability to readers' lives. But Aristotle's point is that Greek poetry, and especially tragedy, represents fictional persons and events (mostly, excepting Aeschylus' *Persians* and a few others), and the value of tragedy is the contribution of unity to actions and words related to a poet's chosen subject and themes. Poetic unity (and its philosophical quality) comes from presenting actions and speeches according to likely or necessary actions of characters, actions based on characters' probable behavior or on universal and necessary laws of human nature. The valuing of poetry above history, Aristotle implies, rests on poetry's ability to convey universal truths and wisdom. We note the obvious contradiction to this claim in Thucydides' claim for the future utility of his work as a “possession forever” (*ktēma es aei*, Th. 1.22.4). There is in addition a paradox in a philosopher promoting truth through the medium of fictional representation; accordingly Plato (c. 429–347 BC), Aristotle's teacher, famously criticized poetry as an unreliable representation of reality and poets as fabricators of the appearance of knowing the truth (Books 3 and 10 of the *Republic*).

Regarding Plato, we have no explicit discussion of historical writing and its place in a philosophical scheme or in the ideal state. We know that, in the *Republic*, Plato favors telling a “noble lie, a fiction in the interests of moral truth that transcends the bounds of factual accuracy” to maintain the order of the state (Pownall 2004: 48). Yet we might only speculate that his use of historical exempla, such as in the funeral oration in the *Menexenus*, reflects his view that, for histories displaying bias, “the patriotic lie is unacceptable,

because it flatters people rather than making them better; distortion of history [the noble lie] is permitted only when it is morally useful” (Pownall 2004: 63). Thus Plato would seem to favor a moralizing history, perhaps that of Xenophon or Thucydides, which requires the reader to see beneath the surface, to question the overt meaning. We cite Plato with caution, since the use of history in oratory is notoriously biased for the sake of making a special point, and here the message in *Menexenus* seems parodic, wrapped in the enigma of multiple personae: the text of Plato, which records the voice of Socrates, who recites a speech supposedly written by Aspasia for Pericles – all composed a half-century or so after the event. The message: though history and rhetoric are powerful devices for suasion, you must scrutinize the content of patriotic discourse. Yet Plato’s view of using prose for moral edification remains true, and he is more likely to accept history than poetry to accomplish this aim. Much of Plato’s writing, after all, is conveyed through the dramatized historical figure of Socrates.

Also contradicting the Aristotelian denial of *mimēsis* in historical texts are, of course, not only Thucydides, but most ancient Greek historians themselves, who are not simply chroniclers of dry fact. They give shape to events that evidence thematic unity and a consistent interest in human nature and character as well as in typical political and military behavior. Aristotle’s dictum, then, seems not to reflect a view typical of the fourth century so much as one that serves his interests in poetic representation, *mimēsis* – the notion at the core of his work on poetry (Halliwell 1987: 70–3 and 171–6). Aristotle’s *Poetics* was written in the wake of Xenophon and others discussed below (Ephorus, Cratippus, and the author of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*), and so some of the drier accounts in these texts may have prompted his views on those writing on “particulars” (specific data), notably in the style of the Oxyrhynchus historian. We recall here Aristotle’s specific mention of “what Alcibiades did” as an instance of a “particular,” namely the actions of the Athenian general Alcibiades in those very narratives of this period.

Explicit interest in *mimēsis* as used in historical narrative and speeches is found in later theoretical works on historical writing, notably in Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ *Letter to Pompeius* (first century BC), where we read that “the representation of characters and emotions” (*ēthōn te kai pathōn mimēsis*) is one of the virtues of historical prose style and is exemplified in Herodotus, who excelled in portrayals of character, and in Thucydides, who excelled in portrayals of emotion (D.H. *Pomp.* 3.18). Dionysius admires some of Thucydides’ speeches for their imitative skill, but he also faults the style in some speeches for being unsuited to occasion and psychological strategy (D.H. *Th.* 45–7). The Athenians’ bald statement of rule of the stronger in the Melian dialogue (*Th.* 5.89) is thought to be

appropriate to barbarian kings addressing Greeks, but unfit to be spoken by Athenians to the Greeks whom they liberated from the Medes, namely that

justice is the normal conduct of equals to one another, but violence is [the law] of the strong against the weak.

(D.H. *Th.* 39, Pritchett, adapted)

Pseudo-Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime* (first century AD) also appreciates the mimetic art in both history and oratory (without making much difference between them): "the best prose writers imitate the effects of nature for the same effect [of altering argument in periods of emotional stress]" ([Longin.] *Subl.* 22). Dionysius and Longinus had strongly rhetorical measurements of what counts as appropriate content – criteria arising from specialized rhetorical training that may seem irrational to us today. The "rule of the stronger" discourse of the Athenians in the Melian dialogue does seem like that of a "barbarian king," as Dionysius complains, but that does not make it historically improbable – indeed Thucydides deliberately alludes to Herodotus' Xerxes (Hdt. 7.8–9), to imply that Athens is the new tyrant state. Given their criteria, Dionysius and Longinus may even put "appropriateness" above the truth. These odd notions aside, those critics did advocate a *mimēsis* in historical narrative that has earlier roots.

Indeed an earlier, explicit theory of historical *mimēsis* is evidenced in Duris of Samos (c. 340–260 BC), roughly a contemporary of Aristotle and possibly one of his second-generation pupils (Gray 1987: 467–86, esp. 470–4 on Longinus and 475–86 on Duris; also Morgan 2007: 559). In a famous fragment that opens his history, Duris says that his contemporaries "Ephorus and Theopompus fell very short of capturing past events. They achieved no *mimēsis* or pleasure [*hēdonē*] in their narration, but paid attention only to the writing itself" (*FGrHist* 76 Duris F 1; Morgan 2007: 558–9). Duris, it seems, placed historical writing alongside Aristotle's tragedy (Arist. *Po.* 1452^b), as a powerful medium that could arouse pleasure through the representation of emotions. Duris' intended source of pleasure from historical texts has been debated: is it from his language or from his effective descriptions of "the objective actions and subjective reactions of the historical characters" (Fornara 1983: 124 and n. 47)? Likely from both, it seems: Thucydides was unusual in explicitly renouncing pleasure in his programmatic introduction (*Th.* 1.22.4), but most ancient historians, even Thucydides, and all ancient and modern prose authors succeed through their ability to move the emotions as well as instruct, to involve the reader in the narrative, and to convey their version of the truth, shaped in an attractive form. Duris did not "invent" the resonances of history with tragedy (i.e. the use of scenes, reversals, narration, speeches and dialogue of characters in the historical narrative) but, importantly, gave more space and a sharper emphasis to the mimetic narratives than had been done in the prior century, combining the teaching aspect of rhetoric with poetic-style pleasure (Marincola 2003: 285–315; Fornara 1983: 124; Rutherford 2007). Scholars have reasonably proposed that Duris in fact represents one side in a polarization of historical style – namely

the side that focused on the psychological and dramatic element (seen here in his concern with *mimēsis*), as opposed to the side more focused on philosophical sententiousness (Timaeus and followers of Isocrates) and with political lessons (Polybius) (Gentili and Cerri 1975; Wiedemann 1980: 237–8; Momigliano 1978: 8).

Duris' practices were adopted by Phylarchus of Athens (or of Naucratis) (third century BC), whose *Histories* in twenty-eight books took over from where Duris' had finished, going from the death of Pyrrhus in 272 BC to the death of Cleomenes III of Sparta in 220 BC, and whose style was savaged by Polybius (2.56–63) either for reasons of method or due to Polybius' political animosity:

And being eager to stir the hearts of his readers to pity and to enlist their sympathies by his story, [Phylarchus] talks of women embracing, tearing their hair, and exposing their breasts; and again of the tears and lamentations of men and women, led off in captivity with their children and aged parents. And he does this again and again throughout his whole history, by way of bringing the terrible scene vividly before his readers ... For the purposes of history and drama are not the same, but widely opposed to each other. In the latter [drama] the object is to strike and delight by words as true to nature as possible; in the former [history] to instruct and convince by genuine words and deeds; in drama the effect is meant to be temporary, in history to be permanent.

(Plb. 2.56.7, 11, Shuckburgh, adapted)

Polybius also faults Phylarchus for not seeking the motivations (plans, modes of conduct, or characters: *proaireseis*) of individuals and the causes (*aitiai*) of events, but only the depiction of actions (Plb. 2.16). Dionysius of Halicarnassus laments the neglect of proper composition – that is, done with elegance, organization, and balance – by Phylarchus and many others like him, for example Duris and Polybius, who “left behind systematic treatises that no one has the patience to read from the beginning to the end” (D.H. *Comp.* 4). Yet Plutarch used Duris' work for his own *Agis* and *Cleomenes*, and Athenaeus cites him frequently.

Several points are illustrated by this discussion of representation. Despite Aristotle's distancing of poetic *mimēsis* from history's truth telling, there is a long-term association of history and its sister genres of tragedy and rhetoric with *mimēsis*. Historical *mimēsis* is a representation of character and emotion, and hence it is linked directly to an interest in connecting readers with the experience of human nature in the agents of history. The emotion related to *mimēsis* has an ambiguous source, including probably both the emotion portrayed in historical persons and that in readers who identify themselves with the characters. Ancient historians can make explicit comments to the reader (through introductions, digressions, etc.), which do not use the mode of

representation; but more often the narrative and the speeches make their point more obliquely, through *mimēsis* that involves engagement of the mind (e.g., in ironic situations) or representation of the actions and words of historical agents. Thus the meaning of history is conveyed in great part through a reader's feeling along with the characters, or through his/her experiencing the characters as one would in observing people firsthand, in the assembly or on the battlefield. Mimetic history may have been "introduced" by Duris in the sense that it was practiced more explicitly by him, but of course prior historians of the fifth century used *mimēsis* frequently in their narratives and speeches.

We note here in passing that there is another sense of *mimēsis* as related to ancient historians, namely that of any historian's "representation" of his predecessors. The term occurs often in this sense, for example in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' remark that Thucydides is not "imitating" (*mimēsamenos*) Herodotus, since he avoids the broad scope of his predecessor (D.H. *Th.* 6); and similar terms are used of those who seek to imitate Thucydides (D.H. *Th.* 52, with four references to literary representation). This form of "representation," with connotations of slavish copying, is perhaps better termed "emulation" or "rivalry" – *zēlōsis* in Greek (whence the English "jealousy"), a competitive relationship common to all Greek literature, which at once is respectful of tradition and seeks to better one's predecessors (Marincola 1997: 12–19). The practice is long-standing, dating among historians at least since Hecataeus, but the explicit theory clearly emerges only with Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Pseudo-Longinus.

Philosophy and History

In addition to rhetoric, there is in the fourth century a new boom in works proposing theories of human nature and values, by which we mean here the philosophical texts that address views on how to lead "the good life" and how to reach it by observing the proper values and by restraining excessive or base emotions. These guides to values and morality are part of the general intellectual background of the age, and as important to consider here as Marxism or Freudianism would be for studying modern historical writing – even if a given author is not an orthodox follower of any trend or "school" of thought. Of course we have already mentioned the sophistic movement in relation to Thucydides, and how Xenophon fell under the spell of Socrates. But in the fourth century we find a wider and richer variety of philosophical schools and a proliferation of traditions, notably arising in Athens and often based in gymnasia, and most famously beginning with Plato and his followers at the Academy in the early fourth century, Aristotle and the Peripatetics at the Lyceum (from c. 336), Zeno of Citium and the Stoics at the Painted Stoa

(late fourth century onward), and Skepticism, initiated by Pyrrhon of Elis in the fourth century (then introduced at the Academy in the third century BC). An account of how each school might evaluate historical writing is beyond our present scope; rather the object here is to note how the rising philosophical schools posed questions for the use of historians (among others), and suggested to them ever more sophisticated notions of human nature and the role of reason in relation to the emotions, applying them to both individual and collective motivation.

Brief summaries here suggest some general idea of the views of each school in the relevant branch of philosophy, namely ethics, which dealt with the human soul, and how these views might enrich historians' perspectives. All acknowledge the power of reason as needed to achieve the good life (Skepticism excepted). And most advise caution in judging by superficial appearances (Skeptics included). Plato advocates the search for an ideal "good" by seeking truth through reason and in spite of the senses. Very roughly, temperance, courage, wisdom, and justice are four main virtues or "excellences" (*aretai*) that correspond to a tripartite soul, made up of mind or reason, emotion or volition, and the appetites. The first three *aretai* stand in a one-to-one relationship to each of these parts. The three parts of the individual soul correspond in turn to three main components of the state: the ruling class, the military class, and the producing class. In the state as in the individual, justice extends over the whole: it is the product of maintaining a correct balance among the three parts, that is, allowing reason and, respectively, the ruling class to rule (see Irwin 1989: 85–117 for a good summary). Plato's Book 1 of the *Republic* infamously presents a defense of "injustice" and rule of the stronger through the persona of the historical rhetorician Thrasymachus, a view close to that of the Athenians in Thucydides' Melian dialogue. When Thrasymachus is silenced at the end of the book, Plato's brothers Glaucon and Adimantus, Socrates' main interlocutors in the remaining dialogue, put up a show of endorsing and expanding Thrasymachus' ideas in Book 2. How to navigate power politics to preserve justice is, to some degree, a concern common to both philosophers and historians in this period. Plato naturally bridges Thucydides' and Xenophon's interest in the tensions between justice and power and their interest in virtue, reason, and social stability (Grene 1965; Shanske 2007; Howland 2000: 875–89). Plato's schema of a tripartite soul can itself arguably be seen as an elaboration of the Sophists' theories on the role of nature and culture (*physis* and *nomos*) in human formation and as a theory consonant with Thucydides' sharp but less systematic observations on psychological motivations throughout his work.

Aristotle (384–322 BC) expressed views that reflect popular Greek wisdom on justice, moderation, and friendship and that are also to be found in the historians of this age, but he organized them in an internally coherent, logical

framework. He held that wisdom is a chief virtue since it helps people apply properly other virtues like courage and restraint (see esp. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 3); happiness can allow nonrational desires like those of eating, drinking, and sex, or the desire for honor, so long as they are controlled through moderation. Socially a human being is a “political animal” (literally, a creature of the *polis*, in other words a social being) who heeds friendship and practices justice both for its own sake and for the good of mankind (including that person’s own good) (Irwin 1989: 136–42); absolute self-sufficiency – individually – is not desirable. Aristotle was famous for being grounded in the study of nature and basing his views on the natural world, defining all things by their form and function. But he was infamously hostile to democratic thought in some of his more complex views, for example, about there being a “ladder of nature” in the world – a hierarchy that placed humans above animals, men above women, free men above “natural slaves.” All manual labor should be done by noncitizens in his ideal society. Aspects of this philosophy, less systematically, all reside in Greek popular thought and are reflected in historians from Thucydides on: the need for moderation, for social bonds of alliance, for recognizing the *phusis* of humans, and for seeing a justification in the political and social hierarchies of people.

Stoics, too, regarded reason as fundamental for correct decision making and virtue: knowing the *logos* (reason) and acting according to it was the life of the wise man (*sophos*); coming to wisdom through empirical observation was one step toward the truth, but it had to be accompanied by knowledge of greater principles. Fate determined order (*kosmos*) in the world according to a universal Logos – and this links Stoics more closely to Greek views on “the justice of Zeus” as a grand force of order. Such views resonate especially with Polybius and his notions of fortune (*tuchē*), but they are also in tune with older views expressed in Herodotus, drama, and epic (e.g., Hdt. 1.32.1; see Marincola 2001: 143–4; Walbank 1972: 58–65). The Stoics saw emotions as all bad and virtue through reason as the way to happiness; in this respect they offer us a stricter formulation of similar judgments in historians (Rist 1969; Inwood 1985).

The Historians

We turn now from general considerations of philosophical and rhetorical aspects of fourth-century historical writers to discussion of some specific, shadowy figures in the lineup, known only from randomly preserved fragments of their works and the testimonies of other ancients. First we note the continuation of local histories, notably of Athens and Attica. Then there are several successors to Thucydides’ chronicling of Greek history, each beginning his account about where Thucydides left off (though ending at

different points): Xenophon (who takes it to the battle of Mantinea in 367 BC); Theopompus; the so-called Oxyrhynchus historian, author of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*; and Cratippus. These authors differ from Thucydides by writing what has been called a “continuous history” or “Greek matters,” *ta Hellenika*, in which the focus is not on a single war but on the broader scope of Hellenic history of a chosen (usually contemporary) time period (Tuplin 2007: 159–70). In other words this type of work is not restricted to local history or biographically focused (e.g., like Theopompus’ *Phillipica*), nor is it strictly a “universal history” that begins with distant origins, carries on to the author’s day, and aims (ideally or in principle) at coverage of all inhabited lands (the “universal” variety may sometimes be more limited in time, but it still aims at the greatest geographical sweep; see Marincola 2007: 171–9; also Liddell and Fear 2010 for a broad discussion).

The Atthidographers

Of known local historians, by far the most numerous (in terms of names and fragments preserved) are those of Attica – the so-called “Atthidographers” (fifty authors and two hundred pages of fragments) – followed by those writing about Magna Grecia, South Italy, and Sicily (Harding 2007; for a good overview, see also Harding 1994). The latter will be discussed in [Chapter 6](#). Accounts of Attica are treated here, although their roots are earlier and a strong tradition persists into the third century BC. (Fundamental earlier studies of the Atthidographers are Jacoby 1949 and Pearson 1942.) After Hellanicus’ *Atthis*, which was a history of Attica – the political region surrounding Athens, discussed above in [Chapter 1](#) – there appears a mid-fourth-century Cleidemus (or Cleitodemus), whom the second-century AD writer Pausanias credits with originating the genre (Paus. 10.15.5). In general, *Atthis*-type accounts began with the kings of the mythical period, continued through the sequence of archons (civic officials), and covered the origins of festivals and cults, the geography, and the creation of political and cultural institutions up to the time of writing (Harding 2007: 180–8). But their authors were not simply dry recorders of events; they put their own stamp on the narrative, through emphasis and interpretation (Rhodes 1990: 73–81; Harding 1994: 47–51; McInerney 1994: 17–37). Cleidemus, for example, was an exegete (interpreter) of sacred laws, and thus his work showed special interest in cults (Meister 1990: 76; *FGrHist* 323 Cleidem.). Of particular interest is Androtion, who was also an active politician: his account covers Greek history up to 344/3 BC, and hence his activity can be dated about 340 BC (*FGrHist* 324 Androt.; Harding 1994). His work served as a chief source for a *Constitution of Athens* (*Athēnaion politeia*) attributed to Aristotle, and also for Philochorus’ *Atthis*. The invaluable *Constitution of Athens*, known from a papyrus first published in 1891, is the best early account of the workings of

classical Athenian democracy. Yet this Aristotelian treatise contradicts the works of Adroton and other Atthidographers in perceiving that the Areopagus likely had constitutional control of the state before Solon, while the *Atthis* accounts incorrectly assume that this body had always been solely a law court, especially for homicide cases; they all reason from mythical cases like that of Orestes, traditionally tried there (Harding 2007: 185). Philochorus, born about 340 BC, is arguably the most important of the Atthidographers, with his *Atthis* in 17 books and his additional numerous works on Athenian themes: *On the Mysteries of Athens*, *On Contests in Athens*, and *The Inscriptions of Attica* – remarkably, the first documentary compendium of its kind (FGrHist 328 Philoch.; Meister 1990: 129–30). He was also a religious official and, it seems, strongly supportive of the old Athenian ideals of freedom and independence. The first four books of Philochorus’ *Atthis* cover mythical times until at least the battle of Chaeronea (338 BC) and perhaps until Demetrius of Phaleon (317 BC), while the other eleven books cover the period until the rule of Antiochus (possibly II or III) of Syria in the 260s BC. Philochorus is prized for his systematic and rich documentation, evident in the two hundred and thirty or so extant fragments.

The Oxyrhynchus Historian

No one follows directly in Thucydides’ school of austere method and thought, with the possible exception of the anonymous author of a work in fragmentary state, conventionally labeled today “the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*.” The so-called “Oxyrhynchus historian” is known only from some two hundred fragmentary papyri discovered in Egypt (mostly in 1906). In view of the rare antiquity of the text, this work is an important source for Greek events of 396/5 BC, notably concerning the Boeotian League (text in Chambers 1993; full English translation in McKechnie and Kern 1988; translation of selected fragments by Marincola 2009: 495–506; discussion in Bruce 1967 and Thomas 2009). It is likely that this *Hellenica* began about 411 BC, like Xenophon’s work, picking up where Thucydides ended, and went at least to 395 BC in the extant fragments – but likely to 394 BC (the battle of Cnidus) or, even more likely, to 386 BC (the Peace of Antalcidas). The work was written in the first half of the fourth century, to judge from internal allusions. Though the identity of the author cannot be known for certain on the currently available evidence (many scholars are agnostic), an attractive view is that he was Cratippus, on whom we will soon say more. Like Cratippus, the Oxyrhynchus author is probably Athenian, has close knowledge of Athenian affairs, and sympathizes with Conon. Bleckmann (2006) has recently made the case for his being Theopompus; he argues that both the Oxyrhynchus historian and Theopompus specifically challenged Xenophon, copying from him, elaborating different details, and altering his arguments; however, the

current consensus is that such an identification is unlikely on stylistic grounds. Without more evidence there can be no certain answer to this puzzle.

The work evidences a general arrangement of events in a strict winter–summer sequence, a fairly objective analysis of motives, and firsthand knowledge of the topography of Asia Minor. The style is rather rhetorically unelaborated, regular, and colorless and uses a restricted vocabulary; the extant sections display neither the regionalism of Herodotus, nor the neologisms of Thucydides, nor the occasional flourishes of Herodotus. Yet, given his objective focus, the Oxyrhynchus historian is arguably closer to Thucydides in spirit than is Xenophon. He is also closer to Thucydides in his wealth of detail and limited subject matter. Because of this author’s conscientiousness and seeming impartiality, yet lack of a distinct style or thought, Westlake has called him “a second-rate Thucydides, seeking to follow the narrative methods of his master without fully appreciating his subtlety” (Westlake 1960: 209–10). The *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* gives many names and places in its narrative, but has no speeches in the extant portions, except for one line of exhortation during a Rhodian *coup d’état* (which points to Cratippus as author). Like the later Polybius but unlike Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, the Oxyrhynchus historian shows an interest in political structures that is exemplified by his discussion of the workings of the Boeotian Federation in Fragment 19.

Specific passages shed light on his thematic interests. In one, the Athenian Demaenetus (like his compatriot Antiochus, below) takes a reckless initiative in winter 397/6 or spring 396 BC, in an episode not mentioned by Xenophon or any other ancient historian (Frs. 9 and 11). On this occasion Demaenetus sailed out in a trireme from Athens, without the authorization of the demos, to join the renegade Athenian Conon, who was in Caunus in Caria (opposite Rhodes) and planned to use Persian naval power to defeat Sparta.

Thereafter a commotion arose; the wealthy and educated classes were greatly vexed and claimed that the Athenians would destroy their city by beginning a war with Sparta. The members of the Council were frightened by the commotion and summoned the people ... [after action against Demaenetus was resolved]. Now those Athenians who were moderate and had property were pleased with the present situation. The masses and popular leaders at this particular time were afraid and therefore obeyed those who had given advice.

(*Hell.Oxy.* 9.2–3, Marincola, 2009: 497)

Clearly the author is privy to and gives importance to the inside factionalism in Athens, not only the factionalism of the maverick Demaenetus, but also that of the elite and the popular dynamics among the citizenry. There is a detached cynicism in the account of the fear of the people and the manipulation of the elite. “Wealthy and educated” (*gnōrimoi kai charientes*) is unusual language;

Xenophon uses *gnōrimos* (“wealthy”) twice (*X. Hell.* 2.2.6; 4.5) but never *charieis* (“educated,” “accomplished,” “elegant”), either in the *Hellenica* or in the *Anabasis*.

The *Hellenica Oxyrhyncha* is a valuable parallel to Xenophon’s Books 1 and 2, which cover the same period, and to Diodorus’ Books 13 and 14, which are likely based on Ephorus (on the importance of Diodorus as a source, see Rubincam 1987, 1989, and 1998). Oxyrhynchus’ Fragment 8 (in Chambers 1993) narrates the battle of Notium in 406 BC just prior to the deposing of Alcibiades, which is also told by Xenophon (*Hell.* 1.5.12–14) and by Diodorus Siculus (13.71.2–4). Diodorus seems to use the Oxyrhynchus historian via Ephorus as a chief source for this period. The Oxyrhynchus historian generally agrees with Diodorus and both of them differ from Xenophon on points of detail, for example:

- the adventuresome Athenian Antiochus, with ten ships, harasses Lysander’s fleet at Ephesus (*Hell.Oxy.* and D.S.) or is “sailing along right past the prows of Lysander’s fleet,” only in his own ship accompanied by a second one (X.);
- Lysander sinks Antiochus’ ship (*Hell.Oxy.* and D.S.) or the latter is not mentioned at all (X.);
- twenty-two Athenian ships are lost (*Hell.Oxy.* and D.S.) or fifteen Athenian ships are sunk (X.);
- the Athenian fleet is shut up in Notium (*Hell.Oxy.* and D.S.) or it flees to Samos, where Alcibiades opens battle against Lysander (X.).

The Oxyrhynchus historian may be relying on reports heard in the Athenian Council, while Xenophon seems to be using Spartan sources and dramatizes the action a bit more.

Another example contrasts the Oxyrhynchus text with that of Xenophon on one issue, namely the account of Persia’s involvement in the origin of the Corinthian War in 395 BC, in order to show possible differences in bias. Fragment 10.2 of the Oxyrhynchus text reports the Persians’ sending of a Greek envoy, Timocrates of Rhodes, to Greek states (Thebes, Argos, and Athens) with money to induce (or subsidize) them to go to war with Sparta: “all these cities were hostile to the Spartans from long before and had been looking for ways to involve themselves in a war” (Marincola 2009: 498). Xenophon (*Hell.* 3.5.1–2) does not emphasize this deeper motivation and foregrounds the bribe (gold to the value of 50 talents) and the condition that the states go to war; the Athenians alone “would not accept the money, but they were nevertheless eager to wage war with Sparta, thinking that it would be their lot to rule [*to archein*]” (Marincola, 2009: 110, adapted). As one commentator observes, “each group of ancient historians accept[s] either the pro-Spartan (Xenophon) or the anti-Spartan (the Oxyrhynchus Historian) view

of the origins of the Corinthian War” (Rung 2004: 415). In fact the two accounts are not necessarily contradictory; the “subsidies” can be seen as seed funding intended to give incentive to a coalition in the making against Sparta. Our interest is in the different emphases of Xenophon pointing up the lingering Athenian imperial ambition and the greed of others allied against Sparta, and of Oxyrhynchus detecting more deeply seated animosities (Rung 2004).

Fragment 21 of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* recounts the Boeotian invasion of Phocis from an anti-Spartan perspective; compare Xenophon, *Hellenica* 3.5.3–5 and the Spartan perspective. Fragments 22 and 23 narrate Conon’s ability to quell a mutiny at Caunus against the forces of the king, which he does by putting to death the leaders of the rebellion: “So then the army of the King ... put an end to its disorder, thanks to Conon and his energetic resolve [or “proactive zeal,” *prothumia*] (*Hell.Oxy.* Fr. 23.6, Marincola 2009: 504). Conon seems to be, if not a heroic figure, at least a model of leadership for the historian. Leadership is again a central feature of the campaign of Agesilaus in Asia (*Hell.Oxy.* Fr. 24), but this time it is an exercise in errors: the Mysian foe kills a number of his men; he fails to take the town of Leonton Kephalai (Lions’ Heads) in Pharnabazus’ territory and cannot capture Gordion or Miletou Teichos, both on the Phrygian coast (*Hell.Oxy.* Fr. 25). The Agesilaus account contrasts sharply with Xenophon’s adulatory and romanticizing narrative of this period (X. *Hell.* 4.1), which includes the general’s arranging of a local marriage and omits his strategic failures.

The Oxyrhynchus historian gives an account of a revolution in Rhodes in 395 BC orchestrated by Conon (McKechnie and Kern 1988: 78–9, 150–1), which is not in Xenophon or any other extant account. When the revolt was about to occur, Conon “sailed to Caunus, wanting [*boulomenos*] not to be there at the overthrow of those ruling” (*Hell.Oxy.* Fr. D XV in the London papyrus, lines 355–6). In relation to our thematic interest in how each historian constructs human motivation, we are here made privy to Conon’s thinking, though the example may seem banal. The term for “wanting” (*boulomenos*) occurs eighteen times in the fragments, and thus shows the author’s interest in motivation in situations where the latter is not readily apparent. The motivation-revealing word “wanting” (*boulomenos*) is a favorite one in Thucydides. At the same time we note that the level of analysis in the extant text does not show any deep interest in positing personal fears and desires of individuals. The author seems more interested in collective behavior, for instance of the Boeotians or Athenians, than in individuals, though this is a speculative observation given the limits of our evidence. The collective characterizations are in the good tradition of Thucydides, and are picked up later notably by Polybius. A further example of this in *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* is Fragment 21.1 (Marincola 2009: 501; London papyrus, Fr. D XVIII, lines 3–4), when a party in Boeotia succeeds in inciting hostilities with neighboring

Phocis to precipitate a war against Sparta, “wishing [*boulomenoi*] to overthrow their [Spartan] rule [*archēn*]” but doing it covertly so that the pro-Spartan party in Boeotia would not oppose them. (See also Conon “wishing to meet” with the Persians “and to get money from them” to avert a mutiny in 395 in Fr. 22.1 (Marincola 2009: 502–3).

If it is correct that the Oxyrhynchus historian was Cratippus, who was of Thucydides’ generation, then it is likely that Xenophon could have (and probably did) read the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* before writing his own *Hellenica*. In this case, the later historian chose to differ from the earlier in treatment and perspective (Thomas 2009: xxvi–xxx). Cratippus, an Athenian, is referred to only in the Roman imperial period, but he was a younger contemporary of Thucydides and in some way his emulator:

[Thucydides] seems to have left his history incomplete. Such too is the view of Cratippus, who flourished at the same time as he, and who collected the matter passed over by him, for he says that not only have the speeches been an impediment to the narrative, but they are also annoying to the hearers [i.e. readers]. At any rate he maintains that Thucydides noticed this and so put no speech in the closing portions of his history, though there were many events in Ionia and many events in Athens that called for the use of dialogues and harangues.

(D.H. *Th.* 16, Pritchett)

Cratippus’ work is said to cover at least the period until the Athenian naval empire under Conon (394 BC). Plutarch (*Glor. Ath.* 345d–e) lists notable events from 411 to 390 BC treated by Cratippus. Even if the Oxyrhynchus historian is Cratippus, the positing of a name helps little with understanding the text, and of greater interest is the internal evidence of the text itself. The historian shows us how the method of relying heavily on firsthand evidence remained very much alive after Thucydides, illustrates how he himself strives for objective narration in dealing with a complex period, and reminds us that the perspective of Xenophon and other historians of this period cannot be taken as having produced the only or the best accounts.

Ephorus and Theopompus

The two other great names in fourth-century historical writing, Ephorus and Theopompus, are difficult subjects to assess fairly since we know them only from the myriad fragments in Jacoby’s collection and from their use as sources by later authors. Ephorus’ *History*, had it survived, would have filled some eight Oxford text volumes, and Theopompus’ *Philippica* about fifteen (Marincola 2007: 104–5). Since antiquity, despite their stylistic differences, Ephorus and Theopompus have often been said to have been students of

Isocrates of Athens (437–338 BC), one of the most famous rhetoricians of the period: Isocrates is alleged to have said of his “students” that the weak Ephorus needs the spur, while Theopompus needs the reins (*FGrHist* 70 Ephor. T 28). This desire to schematize intellectual filiation, when applied to other historians and authors, is to be called into question (Dewald and Marincola 2006: 20–1); yet in the case of Ephorus and Theopompus, while direct mentorship cannot be proven, it is likely that both were aware of Isocrates; lines of reception of Isocratean style, thought, and subject can be drawn.

Isocrates inherited from the influential sophist Gorgias (whether directly, as a student of his, or not) the practice of modeling words so as to lead the mind of the listener, practicing an almost drug-like “seduction of the mind” (*psuchagōgia*) through the arousal of emotions (see Gorgias’ *Encomium of Helen*). Isocrates’ style may be found in those of Ephorus and Theopompus, which are much more dramatic than that of Xenophon. History, one could argue, competed with poetry as an entertaining mode of teaching when Greek drama passed its creative peak, and history, like rhetoric, made truth claims, as both genres tried to support new forms of political power (Grant 1970: 137). These historians therefore not only offered a psychology of the motives of individuals, they used their own sense of human nature to shape the behavior of readers for the better.

What one modern commentator, Josh Ober, says about Isocrates’ educational aims could apply to Ephorus and Theopompus as well:

Ultimately, Isocratean rhetorical education is not about the transmission of knowledge, but about the formation of civic identity; thus, in common with Plato (of the *Republic*) and Aristotle (of the *Politics*), Isocrates’ understanding of education is deeply political, and so his *paideia* [education/formation] is part and parcel of his *politikos logos* [political reasoning] ... Isocrates is clearly concerned with reorienting and widening the reader/pupil’s existing views on the relationship between culture and politics, especially by integrating Panhellenic and Athenian perspectives – whether or not we accept that the Athenian perspective is necessarily meant to be hegemonic ... And the student is surely meant to learn that Isocratean *philosophia* (rather than its several contemporary rivals) is a uniquely appropriate instrument of cultural integration. The prior civic identity is to be integrated with the wider Panhellenic/Athenian perspective.

(Ober 1998: 83–5)

Isocrates’ political aim is exemplified in a famous passage that illustrates one most crucial aspect of the age: a desperate call for Greek unity amid widespread inter-*polis* conflict:

And so far has our city distanced the rest of mankind in thought and in

speech that its pupils have become the teachers of the rest of the world; and our city has brought it about that the name “Hellenes” suggests no longer a race but an intelligence, and then the title “Hellenes” is applied rather to those who share our culture than to those who share a common nature [*phusis*].

(Isoc. 4, 50, Norlin, adapted)

James Porter notes the rhetorical appeal evocative of Athens’ powerful past and calls to mind its reduced military might after the Peace of Antalcidas (387 BC):

Hence [Isocrates] must appeal to past military and cultural glories in order to justify present claims – indeed, his evident reuse of themes from Pericles’ funeral oration is part of the same rhetorical strategy, designed as it is to remind fourth-century pan-Hellenic readers of Athens’s fifth-century glory ... φιλοσοφία and eloquence were in fact the slogans of Isocrates’ own educational program.

(Porter 2006: 383–4)

Ephorus (early fourth century to 327 BC) came from Cyme in Asia Minor and fostered rhetorical history; he had a high but not overly ornate style, an Isocratean moralizing tone, and a more academic approach than an experienced man of state. From his collected fragments (*FGrHist* 70 Ephor., *BNJ* 36 Ephor.; Marincola 2007: 172–4), we know that Ephorus’ virtually nonextant “universal” *Histories* (*Historiai*) in 30 books, used widely by Diodorus, treated events topically (*kata genos*, “by type”; T 11) rather than annalistically: the work dealt for example with the geography of the inhabited world (Books 4–5), the early history of the Peloponnese (Book 6), Lydia and Persia (Books 8 and 9), the Persian Wars (Book 11), early tyranny in Sicily (Book 16) and the hegemony of Sparta and Thebes (Books 21–5). As is typical of later, “universal” works, the treatment expands on details as it approaches current times, so that the last ten books (21–30) covered less than fifty years (the period 387–340 BC). Ephorus began from the return of the Heracladae (the “Dorian invasion,” *FGrHist* 70 T 8) and his son Demophilus wrote the last book (T 9). He avoided myth (F 31) and favored an appeal to Fortune, Tyche, over the divine, which Polybius and others also adopted (see Meister 2004).

We also know that he wrote prefaces for each book and universal content (Plb. 5.33.2). Polybius, his later rival, was critical of Ephorus, calling his descriptions of land battles deficient; but sea battles he considered successful, for what his sniping is worth (Plb. 4.20 5–6; 12.25f; 21.10–11). This was a criticism born out by analysis of Ephorus’ sea battles in Diodorus (Meister 1990: 89). Ephorus’ theme was laudably that of a universal history of Greece, the first great one undertaken. As we saw above, Isocrates had embraced the notion – though not the reality – of pan-Hellenism in an age when the Greek

world was shrinking through closer communication and aspirations of political unity: “I have become a leader of those arguments urging Greeks to concord with one another against the barbarians” (Isoc. 12, 12.13). Ephorus embraced pan-Hellenism, yet he never linked the stories of the Greeks to one another, simply listing events and achievements *polis* by *polis*. “Ephorus was rather the founder of national history and already displayed ... that fatal characteristic of national history, patriotic bias,” cautions Arnaldo Momigliano, continuing:

Ephorus started the fashion that has lasted into our day of ‘books made into books,’ that is, of compilation. Not by chance does the genre of historical epitome – or summary – make its first appearance with Ephorus’ contemporary, Theopompus, who abbreviated Herodotus to two books.

(Momigliano 1978: 11)

K. Meister labels Ephorus a “Schreibtischgelehrter,” “a desk scholar” (Meister 1990: 89; (and see Plb. 12.25f on his bookishness). With Ephorus, historical writing becomes more academic and less driven by investigative reportage or personal autopsy than in the works of Herodotus and Thucydides – *historia*, “inquiry,” thus takes on a new meaning (Schepens 1977: 95–118). For example, his account describing Miltiades’ siege of Paros, “the wealthiest of the Cyclades” in 489 (*FGrHist* 70 F 63) may be derived from Hellanicus; Ctesias’ *Persica* and Egyptian sources may have provided the material for what is now Fragment 65. Ephorus quoted not only historians, but also Homer (e.g., in F 12), other poets, orators, and inscriptions as they served his need. His authorship of the shorter treatises *On Style* and *On Inventions* supports the picture of a studious scholar. Yet a studious approach to history should not be seen pejoratively: direct observation and interview of participants puts serious limitations on the scope of a narrative. Ephorus himself comments that, “if historians could be present at all events as they happen, this would be the best experience”; he sees autopsy as a valuable but often impossible ideal (Schepens 1970: 163–82). Thus he may have questioned eyewitnesses or used his own experiences to fill in material on recent years in the last books. His importance today is real, but is felt obliquely, through the prism mostly of Diodorus, who paraphrased him in Books 11–15. Ephorus gives us the only continuous account of Greek history from 480 to 340 BC and is a precursor of academic historians – notably, among ancients, Polybius and Diodorus.

In a part of Ephorus’ preface it is said that music (*mousikē*) is to be avoided, as it deceives and beguiles humans (*FGrHist* 70 T 8), an idea that resonates with Plato and may represent Ephorus’ move to distance himself from the rhetorical, sophistic mode of Gorgias, Isocrates, and Duris. In any case, it distances him from *mimēsis* and its attendant emotions. So in subject matter generally Ephorus supported a didactic agenda that prized reason (avoidance or rationalization of myth), valor, and the virtues wherever they were found,

for example in the “barbarian” nomadic Scythians. Ephorus praised the legendary Anacharsis (sixth century BC?) as their culture hero, one of the Seven Sages, and the supposed inventor of the bellows, the two-fluke anchor, and the potter’s wheel (F 42 = Strabo 7.3.9). The nomads are presented to the Greeks as models of the noble savage who “surpassed all others in justice” and “are unmatched in battle against external foes and invincible, possessing nothing for which they will serve as slaves” (F 42; see Pownall 2004: 126–8). These virtues resonate with those praised in Spartans, their concord (*homonoia*), manly courage (*andreia*), and the absence of greed and luxury (FGrHist 70 F 149; Pownall 2004: 130). On the other hand, the historian overtly accuses Pericles of starting the Peloponnesian War in order to divert attention from his embezzlement of Athenian finances: “he decided it would benefit himself to involve the city in a great war; for in this way he supposed he could escape an exact account of the money on account of the turmoil and the distractions and fears for the city” (FGrHist 70 F 196 = D.S. 12.38). This motivation seems to derive from comedy or from an anti-Periclean tradition, but it is interesting to see a self-serving counterpoint to Thucydides’ great leader figure (Pownall 2004: 134). Notably, causation for Ephorus resides in the individual; this is here in sharp contrast to Thucydides’ analysis of the complex factors of national character that led to the Peloponnesian War. Also, ironically, the “fears” (*phobous*) and chaos among Athenians are to be contrasted with Thucydides’ identification of Spartan fear of Athenian growth as the truest cause of the war (Th. 1.23), and Ephorus’ Periclean *logos* (“reason” or “account”) is not the general’s prescient reason or his accounting of resources highlighted in Thucydides, but the others’ accounting of Pericles’ ill-gotten gains. Ephorus does at times acknowledge collective sources of causation, but in several fragments he attaches root causes to individuals, for example Anacharsis is a force for good among Scythians and Lycurgus among the Spartans (FGrHist 70 F 118 and F 149) (Pownall 2004: 130). Power, for Ephorus, was held in succession by a series of state hegemonies – the Theban after the Spartan – though we have no certain big picture of his schema (Pownall 2004: 131–2; Wickersham 1994: 119–24). Each people had its characteristic occupations: for the Athenians, that was naval power (*nautikēn dunamin*), for Thessalians, experience in horses, for Boeotians, concern with exercise, and for Ephorus’ home Cyrenians, knowledge of chariots (FGrHist 70 F 97). Pericles also uses his Athenians’ superiority in “naval power” as an incentive, to encourage them to enter war (F 196.51, 68; cf. Th. 2.13). Fragments contrast examples of individual or collective vices and virtues, reflecting rather conventional morality and not indicating any sophisticated view of human nature, but certainly linking restraint of the appetites and adherence to unity as key human strengths for gaining, maintaining, or losing power. Ephorus seems not to reflect pro-Athenian bias; but perhaps he resembled Xenophon with his pro-Spartan slant.

Theopompus of Chios (378/7–c. 320 BC) was supposedly banned from Chios

as a youth, together with his father, for a pro-Spartan attitude (*FGrHist* 115 Theopomp. T 2), then allowed to return in 333/2 BC on the intervention of Alexander the Great. Subsequently he was exiled again when Alexander died and he settled at the court of Ptolemy I, where friends saved him from being executed as a “troublemaker” (*polupragmona*). The itinerant author says: “there is no important place of the Greeks nor any city of worth that I did not visit, and though giving performances of speeches I did not leave behind any great fame or memory of my own excellence” (F 25). That experience may have driven him to seek his fame in historical writing.

The tradition making him a student of Isocrates is to be doubted, but Theopompus was evidently an active orator, composing some 20,000 lines (about 600 pages in a modern edition) of speeches (F 25), perhaps delivered in his travels. Among his pamphlets, again possibly delivered in different cities, are the nonextant *Encomium of Philip*, *Advice to Alexander*, and *Invective against Plato and his School* (T 7, 48; F 259). Dionysius of Halicarnassus has an appraisal of him that may echo the author’s preface in claims of achievement and that certainly offers a contrast to the bookish image of Ephorus:

Moreover, he was an eyewitness of many events, and came into contact with many leading men and generals of his day, whether popular leaders or more cultivated persons ... For he did not (as some do) consider the recording of his researches as a pastime, but as the one thing most necessary [*anagkaiotaton*] in life ... He has related the foundation of nations, described the establishment of cities, portrayed royal lives and peculiar customs, and incorporated in his work everything strange and wonderful found on any land or sea.

(D.H. *Pomp.* 6 = *FGrHist* 115 T 20, Roberts, adapted)

On “wonders” (*thaumasia*) he was a sort of heir to Herodotus, and devoted one book (8) of his *Hellenica* to those phenomena. But the chief impression from Dionysius’ summary is that he led an active, engaged life, like the great earlier historians and unlike Ephorus. He significantly spent time at the court of Philip II in Macedon (*FGrHist* 115 T 7), which led him to write the *Philippica* around the king as a central figure. Theopompus is said to have written 150,000 lines of historical works (4,500 pages) on “the deeds of Greeks and barbarians down to his own day.” He was known among the ancients as a supremely rhetorical historian, with verbal flourish and dramatic structures. His writing is often seen as harsh, ill tempered, and lively, with passages of “pungency and energy” (so Dionysius; see his testimonial in T 20). Yet our most reliable evidence is limited to 83 direct quotations for 598 lines of text, 412 of which come from Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae*, whose aim was to parade sensational, extravagant, licentious, and bizarre anecdotes (Flower 1994: 8). Exegetes beware!

Theopompus' *Hellenica* begins from 411 BC, Thucydides' endpoint, and goes to the battle of Cnidus in 394 BC, which ended Sparta's hegemony (*FGrHist* 115 T 13 and 14), though we know little more from its 18 fragments. The work was probably written in the period from the 350s to the 340s, when the author was in his late twenties (Flower 1994: 27–8) – impressively early, especially if it followed his activities as an orator and traveler, but feasible for a busy life that ended in his late fifties.

Polybius feels that Theopompus should have stayed with the *Hellenica*, and not shifted to a work centered on a single man:

Having set himself the task of writing the history of Greece from the point at which Thucydides leaves off, just when he was approaching the battle of Leuctra and the most brilliant period of Greek history, he abandoned Greece and her efforts, and changing his plan decided to write the history of Philip. Surely it would have been much more dignified and fairer to include Philip's achievements in the history of Greece than to include the history of Greece in that of Philip. For not even a man preoccupied by his devotion to royalty would, if he had the power and had found a suitable occasion, have hesitated to transfer the leading part and title of his work to Greece; and no one in his sound senses who had begun to write the history of Greece and had made some progress in it would have exchanged this for the more pompous biography of a king. What can it have been which forced Theopompus to overlook such flagrant inconsistencies, if it were not that in writing the one history his motive was to do good, in writing that of Philip to further his own interests? Possibly indeed as regards this error in changing the scheme of the work he might have found something to say for himself, if anyone had questioned him, but as for the foul language he uses about Philip's friends I think he would hardly have been able to defend himself, but would have admitted that he sinned gravely against propriety.

(Plb. 8.11.3–8, Paton)

Theopompus' *Philippica*, also scantily preserved but with over 370 fragments, focuses on Philip of Macedon (360–338 BC). Theopompus may have undertaken the subject in 346 BC, when Philip had his first real successes in Greece, and may have published it between Philip's death in 336 BC and his expulsion from Chios in 323 BC (Flower 1994: 31–2). Polybius takes Theopompus to task for moral hypocrisy in flattering Philip, whose court was actually characterized by flagrant immorality:

For after announcing that he was going to write about a king richly endowed by nature with every quality that makes for virtue, he charges him with everything that is shameful and atrocious. So that either this author must be a liar and a flatterer in the prefatory remarks at the outset of his history, or he is entirely foolish and childish in his assertions about particulars, imagining that by senseless and far-fetched abuse he will

insure his own credit and gain acceptance for his laudatory estimate of Philip.

(Plb. 8.13.1, Paton)

But, for Theopompus, Philip was not just another leader; he represented a crucial opportunity for Greek unity, in the end unrealized: “At the outset of his history of Philip, son of Amyntas, Theopompus states that what chiefly induced him to undertake this work was that Europe had never produced such a man before as this Philip” (F 27). But, Polybius continues, the confidence is misplaced:

and yet immediately afterwards in his preface and throughout the book [Theopompus] shows him to have been first so incontinent about women, that as far as in him lay he ruined his own home by his passionate and ostentatious addiction to this kind of thing; next a most wicked and mischievous man in his schemes for forming friendships and alliances; thirdly, one who had enslaved and betrayed a large number of cities by force or fraud; and lastly, one so addicted to strong drink that he was frequently seen by his friends manifestly drunk in broad daylight.

(Plb. 8.11.1–4 = *FGrHist* 115 F 27, Paton)

A description of the licentiousness at Philip’s court, again in a Polybian rant, shows the sparkle of Theopompus’ prose:

Anyone who chooses to read the beginning of his forty-ninth Book will be amazed at the extravagance of this writer. Apart from other things, he has ventured to write as follows. I set down the passage in his own words: “Philip’s court in Macedonia was the gathering-place of all the most debauched and brazen-faced characters in Greece or abroad, who were there styled the king’s companions. For Philip in general showed no favour to men of good repute who were careful of their property, but those he honoured and promoted were spendthrifts who passed their time drinking and gambling. In consequence he not only encouraged them in their vices, but made them past masters in every kind of wickedness and lewdness. Was there anything indeed disgraceful and shocking that they did not practise, and was there anything good and creditable that they did not leave undone? Some of them used to shave their bodies and make them smooth although they were men, and others actually practised lewdness with each other though bearded. While carrying about two or three minions with them they served others in the same capacity, so that we would be justified in calling them not courtiers but courtesans and not soldiers but strumpets. For being by nature man-slayers they became by their practices man-whores. In a word,” he continues, “not to be prolix, and especially as I am beset by such a deluge of other matters, my opinion is that those who were called Philip’s friends and companions were worse brutes and of a more beastly disposition than the Centaurs who established themselves on

Pelion, or those Laestrygones who dwelt in the plain of Leontini, or any other monsters.”

(Plb. 8.11.5–13, Paton)

Yet the criticism of Theopompus shows Polybius’ own moralizing bias and does not allow us to see the context of the comment. The mentioning of debauchery at court perhaps illustrates a balance in the “warts-and-all” depiction of the powerful figure, tempered by descriptions of military and political successes less prominently preserved. Theopompus had perhaps pinned his hopes on Philip, who then let him down. If Phillip was in the end successful, this was perhaps because “he was lucky in every way” (*FGrHist* 115 F 237a).

G. Shrimpton, scrutinizing the fragments, concludes that Theopompus in the end sympathized with Demosthenes’ advocacy of Greek resistance to Philip’s hegemony (Shrimpton 1991: 156–80). When everyone else failed to speak, Demosthenes alone addressed the Thebans,

rousing them and lifting them up in other ways, as he was accustomed to do, the ambassador with others sent off the people with hope to Thebes ... the power [*dunamis*] of the orator [Demosthenes] roused [the Thebans’] spirit [*thumon*], as Theopompus says, renewed their ambition [*philotimian*], and threw all others into the shadows, in order that they themselves in their enthusiasm cast aside fear [*phobon*], calculation, and gratitude [*charin*].

(*FGrHist* 115 F 238)

The fragment not only honors Demosthenes’ role, it keenly shows the historian’s concern with psychological motivation: rhetoric is used as a force (*dunamis*), as effective as other types of power; it deploys hope and dispels fear, calculation (of risks – not necessarily a wise move), and favor (past ties with the enemy). This is as smart a situational analysis of deep motives as one finds in this historian.

The sophisticated ethnic characterizations of Spartans and Athenians seen in Thucydides (notably at Th. 1.70) are not found in these fragments. The Athenians were the main center of opposition to Philip in Southern Greece and, in Theopompus’ view (as some argue today), he succeeded in defeating them, since they were weak, bluntly described thus: “Athens was full of shyster actors, sailors, and pickpockets, also false witnesses, swindlers, and false accusers” (*FGrHist* 115 F 281; Shrimpton 1991; Connor 1968). Athens’ hope for a future was lost after the battle of Aegospotami: “the chief ill for them when the Athenians lost their ships and their future hopes [*tas hexēs elpidas*]” (*FGrHist* 115 F5).

W. R. Connor has more extremely pronounced the *Philippica* a “history without heroes,” in which all actors are criticized (Connor 1963: 107–14;

Connor 1967: 133–54; cf. Connor 1968). Cicero knows no historian more bitter than Theopompus (*FGrHist* 115 T 40). And Plutarch finds his praise more credible, since it is so rare while blame is so pervasive (F 333). Though our conclusions must remain tentative, Theopompus seems to be the bleakest of historians, perhaps the most pessimistic – that is to say, the one who sees most value in negative criticism without any outstanding positive exempla. This does not mean that readers cannot extract useful didactic lessons for themselves: the critique of values always implies a positive alternative to which we should aspire.

The fifty-eight books of the *Philippica* range, in universalist fashion, across all contemporaneous events – culture, ethnography, and religion – and include digressions on Persian history from 394 to 344 BC (eight books!), Asia Minor (four books), Sicilian history (three books), Spain and Italy (two books), earlier Athenian history, regional rhetoricians, tyrants, and religion (Marincola 2007: 174–5; Shrimpton 1991: 59–63). Theopompus shares the interest of Herodotus and Thucydides in moral issues and is drawn to the importance of the character of the individual in history. But, so far as we can tell, he lacks a sense of divine fortune or of human virtue or reason that can, in the end, balance suffering with success, weakness and ignominy with fame and power.

Michael Flower has discussed Theopompus’ “psychological method,” for which he points first to Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ comments:

[Theopompus’ crowning and most characteristic quality] is the gift not only of seeing and stating in each case what is obvious to the multitude, but of examining the hidden motives [*aphaneis aitian*] of actions and actors and the feelings [*pathe*] of the soul (things not easily discerned by the crowd), and laying bare all the mysteries of seeming virtue [*dokousēs aretēs*] and unrecognized vice ... he was thought malicious on the ground that, where reproaches against distinguished persons are necessary, he added unnecessary details; while in truth he acted like surgeons who cut and cauterize the morbid parts of the system ... yet in no way assailing the healthy and normal organs.

(D.H. *Pomp.* 6 = *FGrHist* 115 T 20a, 7–8, Roberts, adapted)

The penchant for deep insight into motives and feelings of the soul is not so much an inheritance from Isocrates, but more closely reflects the influences of Herodotus and Thucydides (Flower 1994: 169–83). We may add that Dionysius’ mention of “unseen motives” and deep “feelings” especially recall Thucydides’ programmatic statement about the sufferings in and causes of the war that was his subject (Th. 1.23). The sharp difference is that Thucydides chose a more homogeneous topic, which was amenable to a more coherent diagnosis of the age and of its dominant states (Athens and Sparta). From what we can discern, Theopompus’ insights seem more attached to

individuals, more *ad hominem*, and focused in piecemeal fashion on each actor, who is thus placed in the spotlight. In addition, Theopompus seems uniformly negative in the extant fragments, always bemoaning the vices of the mighty but seldom offering constructive models of virtue, though caution makes us note that Dionysius includes “the mysteries of seeming virtue.” Flower lists lack of self-control (*akrasia*), greed, and personal ambition (*philotimia*) as the chief targets of Theopompus’ narrative (see also Shrimpton 1991: 127–56).

Theopompus’ less systematic views on lack of control complement (and may reflect familiarity with?) those of Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book 7, chs 1–10), where this vice relates primarily to lack of restraint in appetites but the term *akrasia* can also apply to the inability to control anger or ambition; toughness or restraint (*karteria*) is its opposite. An individual may embody both qualities in different situations or at different times – like the Athenian Callistratus, who is called “in pleasure uncontrolled, but diligent in political business” (*FGrHist* 115 F 97). Alcibiades is praised for his military prowess (F 288), but famously had a wilder private side. The (rare) “Theopompan moral man” is best distilled from remarks about Lysander (F 20 and F 333): he is hard-working, able to cultivate both private citizens and kings, moderate (*sōphrōn*), and above all pleasures; such a man still resists license in sex and drinking (Shrimpton 1991: 142). The interest in a politics of power for states with different constitutions and in leaders who direct the people and the military is highly prominent in Thucydides and also present in Herodotus and Xenophon (and, later, in Polybius). It seems absent from Theopompus, where the success of hegemony is measured rather by the character and values of individual actors. Theopompus overlaps with his predecessors in appreciating the real force of greed and acquisitiveness, but that force is evident more in personal gain and indulgence than in moral or strategic overreach to benefit the state. The ability of reason, intelligence, and stalwart courage to inspire a people is also apparently missing. F. Pownall notes:

Theopompus is interested in the link between imperialism and corruption, of which Phillip represented the culmination, although parallels could be found in the fifth- and fourth-century Athenian demagogues and Sicilian tyrants, which is the device that anchors the historical digressions to the treatment of Phillip himself (Pownall 2004: 174).

Unlike Thucydides, for whom empire arose from a natural human impulse, Theopompus seems to tie it to the shortcomings of specific leaders. Perhaps Theopompus’ pervasive cynicism arose from his early exile and his disillusion in the corridors of Macedonian power (Meister 1990: 395–7).

Conclusions

Most of the fourth-century historians discussed here, especially Ephorus and Theopompus, would probably have agreed with Heraclitus' dictum that "a man's character is his personal destiny" (*ēthos anthrōpōi daimōn*, Heraclit. Fr. 119 DK), which arguably means that one cannot, like heroes in Homer, blame one's own fate on an externally and capriciously imposed destiny (Heraclit. Fr. 247 KRS, 181–212). The pegging of responsibility on one's fate, at least to a degree, and on a person's typical behavior is not therefore novel in the classical period, but continues in Greek thought. The search for truth also links all the historians of this period, and there is a variation only in the extent to which each writer chooses to posit the motives of individual leaders. Each author engages his contemporaries in finding the truer explanation for events of the past through explanations that are less reliant on the grander political views of state character that had been expressed by Thucydides but that did continue other aspects of his causality (Schepens 1977: 118). The Oxyrhynchus historian seems a closer successor to Thucydides than was Xenophon in his attention to detail and in his apparent impartiality, with close tracking of the political infighting in Athens. Local historians of Attica gained prominence in this century and continued for some time after, underlining the continued Greek interest in the "big picture" of the rise of Athens since its legendary kings. Among these historians, Androtion and Philochorus enjoyed a particularly strong reception from later chroniclers of the *polis*. Finally, the most influential figures of this period, Ephorus and Theopompus, were both widely quoted in antiquity, Ephorus being especially followed by Diodorus Siculus, and Theopompus by Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

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6

Diversity and Innovation in the Hellenistic Era

The Hellenistic libraries at Alexandria, Pergamum, and elsewhere developed first in the third century BC, to house the explosion of texts in all genres under the aegis of Hellenistic monarchs. Most famously the Library of Alexandria, begun under Ptolemies, afforded a new accessibility to written evidence and hence new methods of historical research. In Central Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean, the Hellenistic age – conventionally placed between 323 and 146 BC, in the wake of Alexander the Great – not only opened up new political vistas, but also inspired a rich variety of forms of history, not least the diverse biographical treatments of Alexander himself by his contemporaries, Callisthenes, Cleitarchus, Ptolemy, and Aristobulus. The last two were the main sources for the later work of Alexander’s second-century AD chronicler Arrian. Biography became a robust genre and an industry in itself, overlapping with the encomium and of particular use for political propaganda and rhetorical training. Simultaneously, in the Greek West (Magna Graecia) both politics and historical narrative took very different turns, culminating in the distinctive and influential works of Timaeus and Polybius. What all these works had in common was that their forms and perspectives were a very close response to the realities of power of their times and were in dialogue with the narrative approaches of earlier historians.

The expansion of political horizons required an expansion of explanations, and the contemporary growth of technical and academic–philosophical schools and libraries promoted more encyclopedic approaches to events. Despite this richness of innovation, historiography did not become rooted in the educational canons of the day, and no list of “classic” historians was produced by contemporaries (the way lists of dramatists were issued).

What the genre gained in innovation, it lost in cultural importance, perhaps because political instability and economic hardships do not generally favor or encourage robust historical writing. Ethnography was given a new life and later played a large part in the writings of Strabo and Pausanias. The nascent genre of the novel had affinities with the historical recording of both individual lives and diverse peoples, or we might say that the age demanded diverse views of people shaped through dramatic and engaging narratives in both historical and fictional texts. Above all other forms, “universal history” was the invention of the Hellenistic historians, who derived the concept

directly from the Roman unification of the “inhabited world” (*gē oikoumenē*), a historical phenomenon pursued notably by Timaeus and Polybius (Liddell and Fear 2010). The work of the Alexander historians was clearly another crucial new form arising in this era.

The Early Historians of Alexander

With the assassination of Philip II of Macedon in 336 BC began the spectacular career of Alexander, which progressed until his death in 323 BC. He razed the rebellious Thebes, then took on the Persian empire, India, and Egypt, giving rise to a great wave of Alexander historians in his wake. We will discuss later, under historians of the Roman era, Arrian’s much later Alexander history, the *Anabasis of Alexander* (second century AD) – the only extant complete account of Alexander’s campaigns aside from Book 17 of Diodorus Siculus. Arrian’s account relied upon narratives of writers who lived and worked in Alexander’s own time, primarily Ptolemy son of Lagus and Aristobulus (see Arrian 1.1.1; also Cartledge 2010: xv–xx and Baynham 2010: 325–32.) Yet another of the Alexander historians writing contemporary accounts, Callisthenes of Olynthus, was his official historian, “embedded” in the army. His status and his story make him stand out from the cluster of other eyewitness writers – including Chares of Mytilene, Alexander’s bureaucratic assistant/chamberlain; Eumenes of Cardia, his personal secretary and keeper of the general’s journals; and Nearchus of Crete, a fellow student of Aristotle at Alexander’s Macedonian court, later admiral of Alexander’s fleet and author of a rich account on the campaigns in India and Iran (Cartledge 2010: xv–xvii; Pearson 1960).

Callisthenes was a relative of Alexander who tutored him back in Mieza, Macedonia, in the late 340s BC. Together with Aristotle, who was a cousin of his mother, Callisthenes co-authored a list of Pythian victors and Pythian agonothetes (presidents of the games), evidencing an interest in documentation and chronology. An inscription at Delphi honored the co-authors’ efforts (Syll. 3, no. 275). Callisthenes then wrote a *History of Greece* in ten books covering 387–356 BC – thus overlapping the well-trod ground of Xenophon’s *Hellenica*, Ephorus’ *Hellenica*, and Theopompus’ *Philippica*. Only a few fragments of Callisthenes’ *Deeds of Alexander* are extant (FGrHist 124 F 14 and 28–38). Fragment 14 (Str. 17.43; Plu. *Alex.* 27) relates Alexander’s visit to the Egyptian oracle at Ammon and how he was saved in his trek across the waterless and dust-blown desert by a miraculous rainfall and the guidance of crows, which suggests an allowance of the intervention of fortune, if not some divine providence. The passage also recounts the miracle of a long-silent oracle of Apollo among the Branchidae speaking again, and that of dried-up springs flowing again in the same area – all supposed signs of

Alexander's descent from Zeus. Another fragment recounts how the waves of the sea withdrew before the majesty of Alexander (*FGrHist* 124 F 31). So we have suggestions that Callisthenes presented Alexander's power as being rooted in some supernatural force – a sharp departure from the accounts of prior historians, conditioned of course by the extraordinary successes of Alexander's campaigns and by popular views of his heroic, semi-divine status. The turn to mystical causation may have also arisen from similar tales attached to Near Eastern and Egyptian rulers with whom Alexander vied to win popular favor. Callisthenes' predilection for supernatural causation is also suggested by Fragment 28 (Strabo 13.1.13), which indicates his interest in King Adrastus' being the first to found a temple of Nemesis. The more sober Polybius seriously questions the account of the battle at the Cilician Gates, namely the numbers of cavalry and the strategies deployed (Plb. 12.17–22 = *FGrHist* 124 F 35), which Polybius ascribes to Callisthenes' ignorance about the art of war. In the end, as the dramatic tale goes, Callisthenes refused to bow down in prostration (*proskunēsis*) before Alexander, and shortly after he was charged with conspiracy and executed (324 BC; though Chares, to vindicate Alexander, says that he died a natural death while in prison). This made Callisthenes into a kind of martyr to later authors and political groups. Being a court historian is clearly a different calling from that of the many predecessors we have surveyed, yet it portends a new relationship of the writer to the political potentate in years to come, especially in the Roman era.

Ptolemy son of Lagus (later Ptolemy Soter, “the Savior”) was a fellow student of Aristotle at Mieza, a bodyguard of Alexander, a skilled military man, and eventually a marshal of Alexander's empire when the ruler died. Ptolemy chose Egypt as his portion of the Hellenistic empire divided after Alexander's death – a land where he had success in the expedition to the oracle of Ammon Zeus. In 306 BC Ptolemy assumed the title of pharaoh, to forestall rival successors, and reigned until his death as an old man in 285 BC. It was in those later years that he composed his memoir of Alexander's campaigns, which was not surprisingly seen by Arrian to be reliable in its military detail and observations. For example, Ptolemy is critical of rivals like Perdikkas (Arr. *An.* 1.8.1), and he attributes Alexander's finding his way to Ammon to some hissing snakes of Zeus that pointed the route (Arr. *An.* 3.3.5). His *Alexander History* was written likely within the four decades after the leader's death. Ptolemy was an artful self-publicist and an Egyptian ruler who used coinage and the tomb of Alexander to ensure his own reflected glory and to foster the cultural renaissance of Alexandria. The remains of Ptolemy's work show astute and lively (at times gruesome) accounts: Greeks in pursuit of Darius ride over the corpses of fallen foes to bridge ditches (Arr. *An.* 2.11.8); the story of Callisthenes' conspiracy against Alexander is upheld, and the conspirator is later tortured on the rack and hanged (Arr. *An.* 4.14.1, 3 = *FGrHist* 138 F 16, 17); an arrow pierces Alexander's breastplate and enters the lung, letting out hissing air and blood from the wound (Arr. *An.* 6.10.1–2

= *FGrHist* 138 F 25). Ptolemy's accounts of his own battle and that of Alexander in Western India seem clear and vivid (Arr. *An.* 4.24.1–25.4 and 5.14.5–15.2 = *FGrHist* 138 F 18 and F 20). A doubtful anecdote in Ptolemy says that Alexander's mother urged him to show mercy on a hill tribe, the Uxians (Ouxioi), dwelling in the passes to Persia (Arr. 3.17.6 = *FGrHist* 138 F 12). But it is more likely that Ptolemy here omits a more plausible account, whereby defeating the disorganized tribesmen was more trouble than Ptolemy admits, and the story of the mother's plea may be transferred from another campaign (see the note on Arrian's *Anabasis* 3.17.6 in Baynham 2010: 128). Ptolemy may not be thoroughly reliable, but his strength is in his military analysis and vivid account of events witnessed firsthand, which no doubt enhanced the narrative of Arrian and others.

Aristobulus of Cassandria, a non-Macedonian, settled in Macedonia only after Alexander's death and possibly started writing only when in his eighties (Luc. *Macr.* 22), working from his own notes and memories and the texts of other authors. He was by profession an engineer or an architect, and possibly an interior designer, who for example was ordered by Alexander in 324 BC to restore the tomb of King Cyrus the Great in Pasargadae, Southern Iran (Arr. *An.* 6.29.4–11 = *FGrHist* 139 F51). His pro-Alexander bias is pronounced, and he was later labeled a "flatterer" by other Greek writers, for instance when he described Alexander's drinking as mainly social. Apart from Arrian, Aristobulus' work was used by Strabo, Quintus Curtius, Plutarch, and Athenaeus. His account played up Alexander's skills and virtues, for example his solving of the Gordian knot by using intelligence and not brute force (Arr. *An.* 2.3.7). Here are a few more examples. According to Aristobulus, Cleitus died entirely through his own fault and was not a victim of Alexander's drunken anger (Arr. *An.* 4.8.9). Alexander returned to a drinking party only when urged by an inspired woman, thus avoiding a conspiracy (Arr. *An.* 4.13.3–6). Callisthenes was not executed by Alexander but died of an illness (Arr. *An.* 4.14.3; see Baynham 2010: 328). It was the fault of Alexander's subordinate commanders, who did not follow orders, that the army was ambushed by Scythians in Sogdiana near the Indian Caucasus (Arr. *An.* 4.6.1–2). Aristobulus, like Callisthenes, recounts how the ravens guided the army across the Sahara dessert to Ammon's oracle (Arr. *An.* 3.3.6). He tells of the devotion of a Hindu Brahman at Taxila, who joined Alexander's expedition and whom the great leader admired for seeming to have much greater self-control (*phanēnai d'enkratesteron makrōi*) (Strabo 15.1.61). A grueling march through Gedrosia, near the Indian Gulf, is marked by desperate hunger, thirst, and rough terrain, all of which the leader overcomes by enduring even more than his men (refusing to drink water), finally leading them to safety (Arr. *An.* 6.23–6 = *FGrH* 139 F 49). An incident of drink and luxurious celebration at Carmania near the Persian Gulf is omitted by Aristobulus, who recounts only a victory sacrifice there (Arr. *An.* 6.28.2–4 = *FGrH* 139 F 49–50). Rather than erupting in anger, Alexander is favorably impressed by the

honesty of a seer who comes across a portent of Alexander's imminent death (Arr. *An.* 7.18.1–5= *FGrH* 139 F 54). The only fragment from this author that reflects overtly on the power politics of Alexander is one in which the leader, in Strabo's quotation or paraphrase,

contemplated gaining possession of this country [Arabia] ... The pretext for the war, says Aristobulus, was that the Arabians were the only people who did not send their ambassadors to Alexander; but the true reason was his grasping to be lord of all ... [after considering their worship of two deities] he supposed that, after his conquests, they would worship him as a third, if he permitted them to enjoy their former national independence.

(Str. 16.1.11)

Obviously the rationalization would also allow Alexander to forego war against these peoples. No other comment by Aristobulus on imperial ambition is preserved or can be assumed to have been made, but the Greek for "grasping" (*oregomenon*) may reflect an oblique criticism (assuming that this is Aristobulus' wording). It is a favorite term for Thucydides to mark the Athenians' grasp to extend their power after their victory at Pylos (Th. 4.17.4, 21.2, 41.4; 6.10.5). In sum, Aristobulus consistently points up the innate endurance, strategic skill, and virtuous temperance of Alexander, which has some assistance from divine signs. The author's emphasis on the morality and virtue of one man at the center of the account shows a not very complex but honest analysis of the ways in which and means by which Alexander built and maintained allegiance and acquired authority.

The accounts of all these contemporary Alexander historians seem, so far as we can tell, to lack any insightful analysis of individual or collective political motivation. Alexander's ambitious aims and imposing authority no doubt inhibited any direct and honest critiques, or any extensive speeches revealing motivation – as we find in Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon. The result is a chorus of voices that complement one another in singing essentially the same story of the great man's achievements. It took the distance of later authors in the Alexander tradition to rectify this slant, but unfortunately it became all the more difficult to retrieve a critical perspective – one based on firsthand autopsy – on an era that had changed the Greek political landscape.

The Historians of Western Greece

The next most influential Hellenistic historian after Theopompus and Ephorus was Timaeus of Tauromenium in Sicily (c. 360–264 BC), who bridged the way to post-Alexander historians and signaled the transition from Athenian-centered to Hellenistic-style historical writing. But, to understand Timaeus, we must go back to the late fifth- and earlier fourth-century roots of Sicilian

historiography, namely to Hippys of Rhegium's *History of Sicily*, whose fifth-century date and authenticity are shadowy but possible, to Antiochus of Syracuse's *History of Sicily*, which dates between Herodotus and Thucydides (c. 425–400 BC), and to Philistus of Syracuse's *On Sicily* (430–356 BC) (for Hippys, see *FGrHist* 554; for Antiochus, *FGrHist* 555 and Pearson 1987: 8–18; for Philistus, *FGrHist* 556 and Pearson 1987: 19–30; also Vattuone 2007: 189–93). Western Greek historiography, that is, narratives written by Greeks born in Italy or Sicily and Magna Graecia (Southern Italy), took on a kind of colonial perspective (or even a postcolonial one, critical of marginal origins), in antithesis to that produced by mainland and Eastern Greek authors. Diodorus Siculus was the first-century BC heir to this tradition, but other non-Westerners, such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus, also benefited much by incorporating it into their works.

Hippys, who may be associated with Hellanicus (see *FGrHist* 554 F 8; Vattuone 2007:189–90), wrote a work *Chronica* in five books, which evidences an interest in chronology, and works titled *The Foundation of Italy* (*Ktisis Italias*) and *History of Argos* (*Argolica*). Hippys may have used the Olympiads for dating even before Timaeus. His interests were clearly not parochial and he is possibly quite important in the tradition of historiography, though much is uncertain from the very little evidence available.

The fifth-century Antiochus of Syracuse (*FGrHist* 555; Vattuone 2007:191–3) wrote a work on the settlement of Italy and a *History of Sicily* in nine books, possibly used by Thucydides, especially in Book 6. But few fragments remain, and the books of Philistus and Timaeus superseded Antiochus'. Fragment 2 interestingly says that "Antiochus ... wrote up [*xunegrapse*] what follows about Italy, [selecting] the most trustworthy and clearest information from the ancient accounts" (*FGrHist* 555 F 2, Vattuone), recalling Thucydides' use of the same verb at 1.1, which implies a synthesis of sources. Antiochus similarly emphasized seeking the clear truth. Mainland and Western history may have shared some aspects, but in which direction is uncertain.

Philistus of Syracuse (430–356 BC; *FGrHist* 556; Pearson 1987: 19–30; Vattuone 2007:184–6) authored a work *On Sicily*, the first seven books of which chronicled the island up to 406/5 BC, while the second part, in six books, dealt with the tyrants Dionysius I and Dionysius II in flattering narratives. Plutarch describes Philistus as "of all men the greatest lover of tyrants and most of all continually emulating and in awe of the tyrants' luxury, power [*dunamin*], wealth, and marriage alliances" (Plu. *Dio*, ch. 36). Philistus was against the reforms of Plato and Dion during the reign of Dionysius II and served as admiral, unsuccessfully, in a final battle against Dion that resulted in his own death (*FGrHist* 556 T 9a, b, c). His infamous pro-tyrant stance and apparent bias from admiring power represent a significant stage of historiography, in which a historian serves as a virtual

propagandist for the autocratic ruler – a role later elaborated upon under Alexander and by Greek historians of the Roman era. Yet Philistius' work, so far as we can tell, was reliable in matters of detail and presented a lively narrative, which was used by Timaeus and then by Dionysius of Halicarnassus – for example the siege of Gela (D.H. 13.108–13), the building of the wall in Syracuse (D.H. 14.18), and the readying for war against Carthage (D.H. 14.41–6). Philistius also relates the notable detail, omitted by Thucydides, that Nicias disgraced himself by surrendering at Syracuse without attempting to avoid capture, hence Nicias' name is not listed on the Athenian inscription of the dead (*FGrHist* 556 F 53 = Paus. 1.29.12). In justification of the rise of Dionysius I to power, Philistius cites omens of Dionysus' mother's dream and of a swarm of bees in his horse's mane (*FGrHist* 556 F 57 a, b, F 58).

Stylistically Philistius was much admired by Cicero – who said “the Sicilian is first-rate, dense, sharp, concise, almost a mini-Thucydides” (Cic. *QFr* 2.11.4) – and was deemed by Dionysius of Halicarnassus to be, along with Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, “most suitable for imitation” (D.H. *Pomp.* 3.1). Dionysius later adds that Philistius lacks the “seriousness and richness of Thucydides' thought” (D.H. *Pomp.* 5), yet he cites Philistius frequently in the account of Sicilian affairs in his own *Roman Antiquities*.

Timaeus was born in the mid-fourth century as the son of Andromachus, the man who arranged the resettlement of Tauromenium in 358–357 BC (see Baron 2012 for a general study; Vattuone 2007:196–9). About 315 BC Timaeus was banished for his opposition to tyranny, likely when Agathocles took Tauromenium (D.S. 21.17.1). He spent at least fifty years of his exile in Athens, where he studied as a pupil of the Isocratean Philiscus and wrote his *Histories*. Timaeus' own magnum opus was the *Sicilian Histories* ([*Sikelikai Historiai*): an account of Italy and Sicily in 38 books, reaching to 320 BC but extended to 264 BC, with a focus on Agathocles that included the Pyrrhic War. Today we know him only from 164 fragments, derived mainly from Diodorus Siculus' and Polybius' use of him. Unfortunately Polybius' Book 12 offers an extensive and virtually entirely negative critique of Timaeus, so modern readers have only a reflected and perhaps distorted view of this writer. Yet his great contribution to the historiographical tradition is generally agreed to be his role in shaping the highly influential genre of “universal history.” He is also credited with introducing a consistent historical chronology that relied on Olympiads (however we fault that system today). In fact Timaeus' first work was an annotated list, *Olympic Victors* (*Olumpionikai*), which underlines his concern for chronology; and even Polybius appreciates Timaeus' care in consulting all known documents to secure a reliable chronology (Plb. 12.11.1–3). The “universal” genre, adopted next by Polybius, reflected the gradual cultural tightening of the Mediterranean peoples after Alexander, which culminated in the Roman imperializing hegemony over the “inhabited world” (*gē oikoumenē*) (Brown 1958; Meister

2002; Bury 1958: 167–70; Grant 1970: 140–1; Schepens 1994: 249–78; Alonso-Núñez 1990: 173–92).

The *Sicilian Histories* begins with five books on the geography and ethnography of Magna Graecia, the Western Greek regions. Books 6–15 treat the early history of Sicily down to 406 BC, when Dionysius I came to power; Books 16–33 are on the later tyrannies (406–343 BC); Books 34–38 discuss Agathocles (tyrant of Syracuse c. 360–288 BC), being possibly written when Timaeus returned home to Sicily, in old age (Brown 1958: 6). As one might expect, the role of Western Greeks such as Empedocles and Pythagoras in Greek history and culture is emphasized in this account. Timaeus’ style is florid – “Asianist” in the terminology of Roman rhetoric, in opposition to the plainer “Atticist” mode (Colvin 2006).

The Sicilian tyrants Agathocles, Hiero I, and Dionysius I are all shown in a negative light. Timaeus’ tendency sharply to fault the works of previous historians and literary figures led to puns, for example his nickname “the Fault Finder” (*Epitimaïos*) and his “love of blame and accusation” (*philepitimōn kai philenklēmōn*, Plb. 12.4a). He was fiercest in his attack on Philistus, his immediate predecessor in Sicilian historiography. Polybius offers an extensive exposé on the targets of Timaeus and asserts that the thematic flaw of Timaeus is his overly academicized pedantry (*opsimathia*, Plb. 12.4b), which makes him collect facts – including myths, marvels, and fables – regardless of their value for assessing causation. Yet Polybius does allow him a virtue, perhaps an extension of pedantry:

the special characteristic of Timaeus in which he excels and which has won him recognition. I mean his great emphasis on accuracy in the matter of dates, his use of official records, and his attention to this side of his work.

(Plb. 12.10.4 = *FGrHist* 566 F 12)

Timaeus’ rhetoric dominated his search for the truth, according to Polybius, and he seemed to lay on top of the facts an overly rigid moralization that wrongdoers always suffer in the end. Polybius says that Timaeus scurrilously accuses the contemporary Athenian orator, statesman, and historian Demochares of “so prostituting the upper parts of his body that he was not fit to blow out the sacred flame” (Plb. 12.13), when in fact Demochares was a great general and a cultured and virtuous man. But Timaeus could, says Polybius, also be blinded to faults when he had a personal bias in favor of some statesmen – such as Timoleon, a statesman and general who fought for Sicily against Carthage. Timaeus is also accused of geographical and cultural ignorance, due at least in part to his not being well traveled (Plb. 12.25e). Timaeus seems to confess to this fault: “Living away from home at Athens for fifty years continuously, and having, as I confess, no experience of active service in war or any personal acquaintance with places” (Plb. 12.25h,

Shuckburgh). Moreover, Timaeus' speeches seem to Polybius incapable of a meaningful synthesis of the main issues:

But, without point or occasion, to recite all possible arguments for everything, as Timaeus, with his talent for invention, does on every subject, is perfectly untrue to facts, and a mere childish sport – to do it has even in many cases been the cause of actual failure and exposed many to contempt – the necessary thing being to choose on every occasion suitable and opportune arguments.

(Plb. 12. 25j, Shuckburgh)

An example is his putting into the mouth of Hermocrates, the Syracusan fifth-century statesman and general, a simple-minded speech quoting Homer and Euripides on the evils of war and blessings of peace (Plb. 12.25k–26). In sum, Polybius accuses Timaeus of mere pedantry unleavened by the skill of the better historians, and thus of being unable to see the forest for the trees, to synthesize, and ultimately to communicate the truth.

We may sense in Polybius at least some jealousy of a successful rival whom he must discount to enhance his own reputation. Timaeus was strongly pro-Sicilian, and thus may have appeared somewhat provincial in outlook to those who had witnessed the great expansion of Rome later. His Hermocrates was a champion of Sicily against Athenian aggression, in contrast to Thucydides' characterization of that leader (see Plb. 12.25k = *FGrHist* 566 F 22).

Timoleon may have been less of a democratizing hero and liberator of Sicily and more of a temperate tyrant than Timaeus portrays him (Green 1990: 219–20). Yet Timaeus is promoting a Western Greek perspective that proudly appropriates Pythagorean values with which Timoleon was associated (Vattuone 2002; Marincola 2007: 198).

No writer focusing on Sicily in the following two centuries seems to have eclipsed Timaeus in importance (Pearson 1987: 263). His fragments probably include a prefatory “archaeology” on the remote era of colonization, which emphasizes an upheaval when Greek heroes met indigenous Italian and Sicilian peoples and Carthaginians. Some say that his chief historical contribution was the “discovery” of Rome in the written tradition and an appreciation of how that Latin settlement was pressured between Etruscans to the north and Greeks to the south (Vattuone 2007: 198). In addition to Timaeus' universal scope, we can appreciate him as “the most important historian between Ephorus and Polybius” (Pearson 1987: 1). He was used by many later writers of prose and poetry, including Callimachus, Eratosthenes, Posidonius, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Plutarch, Cicero, Ovid – and, needless to say, Polybius. He was also, significantly, the first one to take a serious interest in Rome, again impinging on Polybius' “turf.” Timaeus' work probably ended with the start of the First Punic War, the first arrival of Rome's armies in Timaeus' native Sicily.

Conclusions

Our Janus-like focus here on the evolution of historical writing in the Eastern and Western Greek regions following Alexander and throughout the rise of Rome shows above all new perspectives on Greece driven from the former peripheries of the mainland. Yet there seem to be distractions of political authority in the persons of Alexander and his successors in the East and of Sicilian tyrants in the West that inhibit historians from the degree of independent thought found in Xenophon, Thucydides, Herodotus, and others earlier (Pearson 1987: 263). Of course the fragmentary state of the texts does not allow confident scrutiny, but in the extant fragments we find the heroization or villanization of individuals and captivating stories about them, rather than a trenchant analysis of the basis of power politics, of causation, and of what principles of psychology lay behind the characters. With Polybius, causation and a finer focus on the dynamics of hegemony, in this case that of Rome, return to a central focus.

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Polybius on the Supremacy of a Balanced State

This second-century BC historian attempted a universal account of history from 220 to 146 BC, though the five fully extant books out of the original forty extend only to 216 BC, thus tracing Rome's early rise to hegemony as far as the Second Punic War (see Hartog 2010 on Polybius as a universal historian). Polybius is notable in several ways in the tradition of Greek historiography (see McGing 2010). Like Xenophon and Thucydides, he had firsthand political and military experience of the Greek world; but he adds to this a friendship with the Roman elite of his day, an ambiguous perspective on Roman imperialism, at once overtly sympathetic and indirectly critical, and skill at narrative clarity together with a Thucydidean attention to causality – though he lacks his predecessor's analytical depth. The demise of the city-state, the broadening experiences of the Hellenistic era, and the establishment of Roman rule in the East are all phenomena that contributed to Polybius' view. His work is shaped by attention to its dual audiences, Roman master and Greek subordinate, wherein the narrative and descriptions of political and ethnic interest groups use subtle ambiguity to satisfy both camps (Champion 2004; Dillery 2009: 78–90). The balance in the Roman constitution argues for Roman superior political evolution, but the intervention of fortune in success undercuts the natural right to rule. Like Xenophon, Thucydides, and Herodotus in some respects, Polybius uses his text to both praise and criticize the dominant ruling states, the forces of succession to power being determined in part by human nature, in part by fortune, and in part by extraordinary leadership. Yet the Polybian cycle of constitutions in Book 6 is ultimately left open to the possibility of Rome's slipping into mob rule with uncontested state supremacy, unchecked greed of the leadership, and dissatisfaction of the people. That book, with its many explanations of Roman customs, seems mainly addressed to a Greek readership that will have known constitutional decline from a long and harsh experience (Walbank 1972: 4–5 n19).

Life and Times

Polybius' life (c. 200–118 BC) spanned the crucial period of Rome's rise in the Mediterranean (Eckstein 1995: ch. 1; Marincola 2001: 113–14). His father, Lycortas of Megalopolis, was one of the architects of the Achaean

Confederacy in the 180s BC. The historian himself was an envoy to Alexandria in 180 BC, and in 170/69 BC he was hipparch (cavalry commander) of the Confederation. After Rome defeated Perseus of Macedon at Pydna in the Third Macedonian War, Polybius was denounced and was one of a thousand prominent Achaeans sent to Rome (Pausanias 7.10.7–12). There he met Aemilius Paulus, general of the Third Macedonian War, and became a friend and mentor to Aemilius' son, P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus.

Polybius' narrative of his early friendship with Scipio is related in a vivid account that also reveals some of his core values (Plb. 31.23–6). The young Scipio expresses to Polybius anxieties about his own “quiet and indolent” character and his lacking Roman “decisiveness and action”; the Greek says that Scipio's reticence shows a noble nature and that he will help him to “speak and act in a way worthy of his ancestors.” The episode not only sketches a tender scene, it resonates with the preface to Book 1, discussed below, in which history is acknowledged as a form of education, *paideia*, for all but the lazy and disengaged and as a means to foster activity and thought. Polybius then highlights Scipio's remarkable self-discipline in front of the influx of Greek habits of intemperance, such as extravagant indulgence in prostitution or exotic foods. Scipio's reputation for selfless generosity began with his giving his mother much of an inheritance, an act that illustrated Roman piety toward the family. Scipio's case allows the historian to illustrate core issues in the *Histories* – for instance teaching as a pragmatic aid for those entering public life, or the sharp contrast between Greek vice, Roman virtue, and the risks of moral decline as a result of cultural contamination. One wonders how this would have been received by Greek readers. Polybius does not maintain that all Greeks are intemperate, but that certain corruptive aspects of Greek culture (e.g., the symposium) could be adopted by less strong-willed Romans.

Scipio Aemilianus became the victor and hero of the Third Punic War and led the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC. Polybius accompanied Scipio to Spain (151 BC) and to Africa, meeting Masinissa and returning to Italy over the Alps, in Hannibal's footsteps. The historian witnessed the destruction of Carthage together with Scipio, when the Roman poignantly shed a tear for fear lest Rome suffer the same fate (Plb. 39.5). After Mummius sacked Corinth in 146 BC, the Romans settled in Greece and Polybius visited Alexandria and Sardis. We do not know whether he was with Scipio in Numantia in the 130s BC, when he was in his seventies. He may have died at the age of eighty-two, supposedly after falling from a horse, living into the age of the Gracchi (Luc. *Macr.* 23; Ziegler 1979: 983–91).

In Megalopolis, Pausanias describes a monument to Polybius that bears a verse inscription saying: “He roamed over every land and sea, and became an ally of the Romans and stayed their anger against the Greek nation” – to which Pausanias adds:

whenever the Romans obeyed the advice of Polybius things went well with them; but with matters on which they did not take his instruction, they say there were mistakes. All the Greek cities that were members of the Achaean league got permission from the Romans that Polybius should draw up constitutions for them and frame laws.

(Paus. 8.30.8–9)

This dedicatory inscription and similar ones at Olympia and Cleitor point to the positive reputation (perhaps not unanimously held) that the author enjoyed among many fellow Greeks; Pausanias' anecdote about advice given to the Romans themselves suggests the historian's role as an active advisor to influential Romans. To "roam over every land and sea" instantly evokes the proem to the *Odyssey* and puts the historian in the role of a clever hero, thirsty for knowledge and deeply wise as a result of accumulated experience. Polybius indeed quotes the Homeric proem after asserting: "Personal inquiry, on the contrary, requires severe labor and great expense, but is exceedingly valuable and is the most important part of history" (Plb. 12.27.6).

We know from Polybius himself about his cavalry command in 169 BC – the second highest office in the Confederation (Plb. 28.6.9). And the historian discusses an episode in which he himself has Scipio ask Cato to support the return of Greek exiles to Achaea (Plb. 35.6). When this request is granted and Polybius asks for a second favor – namely that the exiles also retain the same honors in Achaea – Cato says with a smile that Polybius, like a second *Odysseus*, wanted to go back into the Cyclops' cave, for his cap and belt left there. The anecdote well illustrates the give-and-take status of Polybius among Romans and his self-styled "Odyssean" character (Walbank 1972: 51–2; Marincola 2001: 138).

Readership, Structure, and Character of the Work

Polybius' objectivity has reasonably been questioned (Green 1990; Mellor 1997). Did he attempt to vilify the Achaean politician Callicrates because the latter was responsible for his own and his father's exile? Did his loyalty to Scipio lead him to portray Scipio's opponents unfairly? Documented observations of political bias remind us that pure objectivity is impossible and that the social and personal context of the author is always a factor in the choice of topics and in their treatment. The tensions and balances that Polybius had to observe are magnified by his social position in Roman culture. He occupied a place of social ambiguity: he was in part the conquered Roman foe sent from his homeland, in part the ascending and ambitious Hellene who had risen to the role of entrusted friend of the elite. He was a peripheral figure, brought to the center by dint of his intellectual merit. He

could be critical of his own people and was a steadfast defender of the power of the Romans as their might spread across the Mediterranean. His perspective arguably had to be more finely balanced than that of any Greek historian before or after. Undoubtedly Polybius had strong critics among some fellow Greeks. There is no evidence that he was broadly considered *persona non grata* in his homeland, although there was reason for Greeks to see him as such. We do not know whether Romans read his work with circumspection – could he be earnest in his praise of Rome, given his native ties to the East? It is a signal achievement on Polybius’ part that his biases, as they may well have been, exist mostly without diatribe or bluntness in a veil of plausible deniability (or “indirect historiography,” as Champion 2004: 232–3 calls it), and others’ biases against him are muted or nonexistent in the preserved tradition. Bias is, of course, a slippery term, which implies praise or blame motivated by personal interest and not justified by the objective facts (Marincola 2001: 136). When Polybius’ comments seem charged with partiality, he gives full justification and evidence. He is harshest, we will see, in criticism of his fellow, near-contemporary historians. This thematic refrain not only projects a kind of defensive self-pride onto his professional identity, but promotes his definition of historical “truth” and lack of bias, founded on a fair assessment of the virtues and vices of historical agents. He also shows consistent disdain for fellow Greeks of Achaia and Aetolia. But he is deeply committed to a bigger narrative – one in which there is no room for personal sniping, which takes in the full Mediterranean context, and whose anchoring project is the tracing of the sudden and impressive growth of Roman power.

In the event, Polybius produced an immense and finely balanced work on the theme of the rise of Rome, tipped heavily to give credit and honor to the new megapower, yet tempered with praise and blame for both Rome and its foes, as was due. The work was reasonably well grounded in the prevailing currents of opinion of the era. We note that Polybius himself had an administrative hand in the reorganization of Macedonia in 148–6 BC (Badian 1968: 21). It is also noteworthy that, since the work was written in Greek, the largest available audience consisted of the people from the Eastern Mediterranean; well-educated Romans were perhaps fewer but, to the author, they were the more important readers (Walbank 1972: 3–6; McGing 2010: 67; Luce 1997: 126–7). When discussing Aemilius Paulus’ remarkable lack of avarice, Polybius states:

If what I have said shall seem incredible to some, one must understand that fact, since this author clearly knows that the Romans especially will take up these books on account of the work containing their many very famous deeds. It is not possible that they will be unaware of these events and unlikely that they will pardon a person who misrepresents them.

This does not necessarily predict that most readers will be Romans but that, of all readers, Romans will have a special interest. Obviously the caution here is for non-Romans, who are then further warned to keep in mind that falsehoods about the Romans are not present here, since the Romans would not accept them. Elsewhere Polybius continues to be defensive about aspects of his work that Greeks would criticize – for instance about not hiding faults of the Greeks, as a good Greek should do (Plb. 38.4). He is almost obsessively conscious of his Greek readership, but he is ultimately translating culture in both directions, since he himself has experience in the administration of power among both people.

Given this readership, the work must be seen as a mixture of apology and propaganda for the Roman “imperial” machine (imperial in terms of the expansionist republic, see Harris 1979; but perhaps more accurately a “hegemonic” machine, see Kallet-Marx 1996). The Greeks had been militarily under Roman hegemony, and Polybius was the obvious one to explain Roman rule as an almost natural or fated phenomenon. Understanding Rome’s hegemony over the likes of Carthage may make its rule of Greece more sufferable. Polybius praises Roman supremacy consistently but, one scholar importantly adds, he does so with critical insight and with implicit advice to subordinate states on how to maintain a degree of dignity and independence without resorting to armed resistance (Baronowski 2011).

Our comprehension of the final structure of Polybius’ work is impeded by the fragmentary state of most of the forty books. The entire narrative seems generally to proceed chronologically, by quadrennial Olympiads, with geographic progression from east to west within the time frame. The exceptions to this method are Books 1 and 2, which are effectively a monograph on Rome before the second Punic War (Books 1 and 2 are on the First Punic War, 264–241 BC and other events to 220 BC; Book 3 is on the Second Punic War, from 218–16 BC, and features Hannibal to the battle of Cannae; Books 35–9 cover the Third Punic War, 149–146 BC, and P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus). There are greater and lesser digressions and set comparisons of states and individuals throughout, most significantly the excursus on the constitution and culture of Rome occupying Book 6. Polybius once even underscores the stylistic and cognitive value of variation, to keep readers’ attentions with a varied selection, as of music or food (Plb. 38.5). Finally, modern commentators have observed a telling shift of authorial perspective in the final Books 35–9, which extend the narrative beyond the original plan of ending in 168 BC (battle of Pydna and end of the Third Macedonian War) and go to 146 BC (destruction of Carthage by Scipio; see Walbank 1997; Marincola 1997: 189). Polybius had earlier followed the Thucydidean habit of mentioning himself in the third person when he was a participant in events, and in the first person for authorial comment. But at 36.12.1–5 and thereafter he deliberately uses the first person for his

involvement in affairs, primarily because the narrative genre changes from history proper to memoir, when the author is more involved and better informed in the Roman circle of power.

Polybius' work is typically and accurately characterized by several features. First it is didactic, a quality discussed below. Second, it is pragmatic, since Polybius is famous for treating "political" actions in the sense of all aspects of the *polis*, social, religious, military, and political in our sense. This recalls but expands on Thucydides' hope that his work will be "useful" (Plb. 1.22.4), Polybius admitting both utility and pleasure as desirable aims (Plb. 1.4.11 and passim; Walbank 1972: 6).

Third, Polybius' work is imbued with the spirit of Thucydides, who seeks the causation of events. Causation is sought for events in their beginnings (*archai*) and in their causes (*aitiai*) (3.6.1–7; Walbank 2002: 249). This perspective Polybius shared broadly with Thucydides generally, though the earlier writer used *prophasis* for his deepest explanation (Th. 1.23), while the later one used that term in its ordinary sense of "pretext." Polybius notably digresses on causation at 3.6–8, where he seeks to distinguish between the cause and the beginning of the war with Hannibal by noting the analogy with the deeper origins of Alexander's war against Persia, with roots in the expeditions of Xenophon and of Agesilaus, and indeed with analogies to the physician's diagnosis of human illness – symptoms are not causes. Citing the Roman annalist Fabius Pictor, Polybius says that Hannibal's motives were inherited from Hasdrubal, who sought revenge for the outrage on the Saguntines, and who pursued his own "ambition and love of power" (*pleonexian kai philarchian*, Plb. 3.8.1); but then he adds his own more nuanced causation (Plb. 3.10): the indignation of Hamilcar Barca, Hannibal's father, following his defeat in Sicily, and his anger at his paying reparations to the Romans. In sum, Polybius throughout seeks human motives as the real causes, and in this he is in harmony with Thucydides, though he avoids the general "laws" of human nature of his predecessor. He also resembles Thucydides in the portrayal of specific national character as a crucial factor in events. Deviating from his predecessor, Polybius schematizes the roles of constitutions and cultural values, perhaps overly so, in his "cycle of constitutions" in Book 6.

Fourth, Polybius also magnifies Thucydides' ascription of *tuchē* ("chance" or "fortune") as a governor of events. For the earlier writer, *tuchē* was a curiously coincidental force (e.g., at Sphacteria), introduced almost to tease suggestively that a cosmic guidance may be at work, beyond our reason; for Polybius, it varies from incidental causalities to the divine power of the Hellenic goddess Tyche (Walbank 2002: 248–57). His introduction underlines the importance of tracing the vicissitudes of fortune in the fate of states and not honing to an isolated war:

I thought it, therefore, distinctly my duty neither to pass by myself, nor allow anyone else to pass by, without full study, a characteristic specimen of the dealings of Fortune at once brilliant and instructive in the highest degree. For fruitful as Fortune is in change, and constantly as she is producing dramas in the life of men, yet never assuredly before this did she work such a marvel, or act such a drama, as that which we have witnessed.

(Plb. 1.4.4–5, Shuckburgh 1962)

Polybius later cites Demetrius of Phalerum's treatise on Tyche regarding the mutability of fortune for the Macedonians, who rose from the margins of Greek states to Alexander's empire, then fell under Perseus. Tyche seems for Polybius often a kind of shorthand to explain occasions of evil being punished and virtue being rewarded in a cosmic balance sheet. But, in the case of the rise of Rome, some have seen that force as "a conscious and purposeful power directing world events towards a closely defined end" (Walbank 2002: 248). The apparent contradiction between a supernatural plan and the more easily mappable course of human motivation and thought is not a serious problem, since it describes a view that permeates Greek culture. Humans can suspect, and speculate on, a divine hand in things, but they can never be sure of its exact and whole design. The "will of Zeus" is a matter for seers, who should not reveal the whole plan; human motives and actions in response to chance are more properly the historian's – and Polybius' – concern (on the scholarly debate about *tuchē*, see Hau 2011).

More characteristics, less universally agreed upon, could be singled out, but we note one in particular here: human character. Character is related to the historian's keen and pervasive interest in human identity and its typical aspects, observed in both ethnic groups and individuals. Character is of course also one key element in causation, and it is connected to other themes. Craige Champion's study usefully picks out the crucial role of national character as a touchstone of the early books (Champion 2004: 100–43; Eckstein 1995: 260). Books 1 to 3 expound the formation of Roman character through continual warfare with aggressors: the courage, daring, and ferocity of Rome and its opponents. Book 1 contrasts Roman self-sufficiency with Carthaginian dependence, for instance on mercenaries. Book 2 contrasts Romans with Gauls, who are portrayed as greedy, treacherous, and impulsive. Achaean history comes to the fore in Books 2, 4, and 5, paralleling Rome in 1, 2, and 3. Aratus of Sicyon and Dorimachus of Aetolia represent the characteristics of their people, as Hannibal does of Carthaginian collective character. Achaea is an exemplar of Greek character, while Aetolia shows the barbarous characteristics of Rome's enemies. Throughout the work, individuals are important causative factors or instructive examples that embody types of national character (e.g., the Illyrians Agron, Teuta, and Demetrius of Pharos), or models of leadership (e.g., Philopoemen and Aristaenus; Q. Fabius Maximus, Flamininus, and Scipio Aemilianus) or formidable foes (e.g.,

Hannibal and Philip V). In much of this manner of observing the role of ethnicity and individual agency, we note, Polybius does not differ greatly from his predecessors. His originality lies in his setting the factor of human nature into a strong polarity, in which the Romans and the Achaean Greeks emerge perhaps not as idealized paradigms, but as strongly positive models of enacted virtue against which many others are measured. This stark scale throughout the work is absent in Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, where even the protagonists seeking to obtain or preserve freedom have their significant flaws. Champion (2004: 137–43) has noted the parallels between Achaia and Rome in Books 1 to 5, in which the two cultures share a high valuation of rationality over barbarian emotion, of legality and justice over lawlessness and aggression, and of political, economic, and military independence over a reliance on mercenaries or oppressed subjects. For both states, communal good outweighs individual interests and is fostered by education, law, and good government. We note that Champion has convincingly distinguished, in Books 7 and following, a degeneration of the Roman and Achaean virtues expounded in the first five, with exceptions such as Scipio Aemilianus, who points up the decline in the morality of many Romans contaminated by licentious Greek customs (symposia and the like). The balanced illustration of virtue followed by some decline would then serve as a warning signal to both Greek and Roman readers, mainly the elite, who could claim distance from the unrestrained rabble and yet cite paradigms of past behavior as a means to foster future leaders.

Although a view of human nature informs all historians, Polybius discusses human nature at greater lengths, more explicitly, and more richly than any ancient historian (Eckstein 1995: 239–54; Marincola 2001: 144–8). Unlike Thucydides, Polybius does not cite “the human factor” (*to anthrōpinon*, Th. 1.22.4) or human nature explicitly in his programmatic introduction. He does not, like Thucydides, represent the typical Greek binary in human nature, rationality versus the unreasoned emotions of greed, anger, revenge, and so on. Yet throughout the work he does invoke principles of human motivation and character, embedded in typically pragmatic comments on individuals. It is these that afford deeper insight into his system of human nature, though “system” suggests too rigid and coherent a philosophical theory. The character sketch of Hannibal (Plb. 9.22–6) is one such crucial passage illustrating the Polybian view of human nature. The cause of the Second Punic War, he says, was one man and one mind (*psuchē*), that of Hannibal. This is an oversimplification of the several causes discussed further below, but it does reveal the author’s high estimation of the human factor. *Psuchē* may be defined as “the conscious self or personality as center of emotions, desires, and affections” as well as the “intellectual and moral self” (*LSJ s.v. ψυχή* IV). Polybius certainly admires the ability of Hannibal’s *psuchē* to carry out such a grand ambition. Whether Hannibal was, in blunt terms, excessively cruel or greedy is a question the historian hesitates to judge, since such aspects are

difficult to determine and need to be seen in context. He elaborates:

And yet is it not reasonable to suppose that there exist in the same natures [of individuals] the most contradictory dispositions [*diatheseis*]? They are compelled to change with the changes of circumstances: and so some rulers often display to those around them a disposition [*diathesis*] opposite to their nature.

(Plb. 9.23.4)

Diathesis is therefore a disposition or an arrangement of one's emotions and reason in a certain composition that makes up an individual's character, just as one's physiological traits constitute one's bodily appearance. Its occurrence is noteworthy here, since normally the term *hexis* ("habit" or "state of mind") is used for the *psuchē* while *diathesis* is used of the state of the body, notably in Plato (e.g., *Lg.* 650b). Perhaps Polybius is simply less technical in usage, or perhaps he is here emphasizing external compulsion, which determines *diathesis* – particularly for those in power, where circumstances can change often and require revision of aims and plans – and downplaying the ruler's conscious personal choice of his state of mind. The principle of contradictory disposition due to circumstances holds true for generals, rulers, kings, and even states, says Polybius, surprisingly. In the example of Athens and others, we see that the *diathesis* analogous to that of an individual is not an internal, mental one, but one dependent on the character of the leader: Pericles demonstrates noble actions, Cleon tyrannical ones (Plb. 9.23.6–9). After the fall of Capua, Hannibal's circumstances change, becoming less stable – the "crisis of circumstances" forcing the leader to act as he would not choose to do; unfairly, it seems, Carthaginians characterized him by his love of money and Romans by his cruelty (Plb. 9.26). Later we come across a similar assessment of Philip V, who became more arrogant in demanding favors of citizen women as his reign went on: "And it appears to me that the good qualities were innate [sc. "existed in his *phusis*"], while the defects grew upon him as he advanced in years, as happens to some horses when they grow old" (Plb. 10.26.8).

Another key passage on character further informs this picture. A Polybian hero such as Aratus is faulted for cowardice in actual battle, and the author explains:

Thus human natures [*phuseis*] possess something multiform [*ti polueides*], not only in their bodies, but even more so in their personalities [*psuchais*], so that the same man not only has an aptitude for one kind of activity and not for another, but in activities which are of the same type, the same man is both very clever and very dull, or similarly very bold and very cowardly. Nor is this unexpected; it is a fact familiar to all those willing to pay attention.

(Plb. 4.8.7–8; see Eckstein 1995: 239; Marincola 2001: 144–5)

The Aratus passage suggests that the apparent contradiction in individual action is internal, while the Hannibal and Philip V sketches indicate the force of circumstances, which cause different dispositions (Eckstein 1995: 239–40; Walbank 1972: 93–8). Eckstein gives one explanation for the apparent contradiction by suggesting that, although a person contained internal contradictions, “there was a *limit* to the intensity” of such self-generated contradictions: Aratus did not reach his limit, but Hannibal and Philip V did, and acted due to external compulsions. This notion of limits explaining contradictions caused internally and externally might, in my view, be better understood simply as one of different sources of contradiction, some arising from natural dispositions (*diatheseis*) within an individual *psuchē* and others from the pressure of circumstances and the latter being particularly evident in leaders facing political and military challenges that cause them to act against or outside their normal dispositions. In any case, as Eckstein observes, this multiform aspect of human character allows both for education (*paideia*) through experience or through intellectual learning (including history) and for decline or weakening through succumbing to greed, ambition, and other vices – which is even more frequent in practice. Didactic encouragement to aim for the “truth” (*alētheia*) is Polybius’ strongest antidote to the false distractions of vice:

Nature has proclaimed to men that Truth is the greatest of gods and has invested her with the greatest power [*dunamin*] ... she finds her own way of penetrating into the hearts [*psuchas*] of men, and sometimes shows them her power at once, sometimes, after being darkened for years, at last she prevails through her own force and crushes [*katagōnizetai*, “defeats in a contest”] falsehood.

(Plb. 13.5.4–6)

The almost divine potency of truth is a mark of Polybius’ credo, but it is directly tied to the human personality that it can change. This thinking is in line with that of Aristotle (*EN* 2.1–6, 1103^a14–7^a25), for whom virtue (*arēte*) is a quality that is acquired by choice and fostered through education. “Men are good in one way, but bad in many,” notes Aristotle (*EN* 1106^b35, Ross), quoting a Pythagorean dictum. Since “we feel anger and fear without choice, but the virtues are modes of choice and involve choice,” virtues are states of character (*hexeis*), and not active or passive personal forces – *dunameis* (“faculties” or “powers”) or *pathē* (“passions”) (*EN* 1106^a2–4, 10–12). And in human choices “it is harder to fight with pleasure than with anger, but both art [or “skill,” *technē*] and virtue [or “excellence,” *aretē*] are always concerned with what is more difficult,” says Aristotle, citing Heraclitus (*EN* 1105^a7–9). Similarly, Polybius says (in an uncertain context): “Many men, it would seem, are desirous of doing what is honorable, but it is only a few who venture to attempt it; and of those who do, rare indeed are those who persevere in their duty to the very end” (Plb. 27.20.3; see Eckstein 1995: 252). Another thread

current in Polybius' day was the Stoic view that human perversion could arise from communications with other people or from the pressure of external circumstances, though the historian does not reflect any specific allegiance to Peripateticism, Stoicism, or any of the "orthodox" schools of thought (Walbank 1972: 94–6).

Therefore, along the lines of this received Greek wisdom, Polybius portrays vice in people much more frequently than virtue and shows how some individuals, by effort and learning, adhere to the good, but most succumb to passions. Polybius differs from Aristotle pointedly in two aspects, namely in specifying innate "dispositions" (*diatheseis*) of the *psuchē* rather than "states of character" (*hexeis*) that involve choice and in identifying those dispositions as "aspects of human nature" (*phuseis*), not of cultural learning. Still, Polybius does not adhere rigidly to a nature–culture dualism in personalities but admits that change is possible through *paideia*, cultural formation.

Themes and Significant Passages

Polybius' preface is worth a close reading that would help us appreciate his major themes and his place in the tradition of Greek historical writing (for an outline of Polybius' text, see McGing 2010: 223–40).

Had the praise of History been passed over by former Chroniclers it would perhaps have been incumbent upon me to urge the choice and special study of records of this sort, as the readiest means men can have of correcting their knowledge of the past. But my predecessors have not been sparing in this respect. They have all begun and ended, so to speak, by enlarging on this theme: asserting again and again that the study of History is in the truest sense an education, and a training for political life; and that the most instructive, or rather the only, method of learning to bear with dignity the vicissitudes of fortune is to recall the catastrophes of others. It is evident, therefore, that no one need think it his duty to repeat what has been said by many, and said well. Least of all myself: for the surprising nature of the events which I have undertaken to relate is in itself sufficient to challenge and stimulate the attention of everyone, old or young, to the study of my work. Can anyone be so indifferent or idle as not to care to know by what means, and under what kind of polity, almost the whole inhabited world was conquered and brought under the dominion of the single city of Rome, and that too within a period of not quite fifty-three years? Or who again can be so completely absorbed in other subjects of contemplation or study, as to think any of them superior in importance to the accurate understanding of an event for which the past affords no precedent?

(Plb. 1.1, Shuckburgh)

Prior historians are called, literally, “those writing up” (*anagraphontes*) their assembled data for public readership, the “up” marking the public visibility, as in an inscription’s being “set up.” It should be observed that Thucydides used the different term *sungraphein* (literally “to write [what has been gathered] together”), emphasizing the collection of data in his process (Th. 1.1.1). In the passage above, Polybius notes that others before him have said “again and again that the study of History is in the truest sense an education, and a training for political life; and that the most instructive, or rather the only, method of learning to bear with dignity the vicissitudes of fortune is to recall the catastrophes of others.” We have here two key points, namely that history (*historia*) is the truest form of instructive upbringing (*paideia*) and literally of exercise (training, *gymnasia*) for activities in the city-state: not just for political life in our sense, but in the Greek sense, which implies all citizens’ responsibility for being engaged in communal life. It is in this sense that Polybius labeled his work a “pragmatic” history (*pragmatikē historia*), since it overtly claims a practical use: that of applying lessons from the past to one’s present society. It is also “pragmatic” or “factual” in that it cites empirical data such as documents, memoirs, geographical observation, and eyewitness interviews. Thus both the content and the aim are pragmatic. Second, the aims of this particular work are to explain the remarkable phenomenon of the Mediterranean coming under the dominion (*archē*, also signifying “empire”) of all people – except for the “idle,” who have no engagement in civic life; and to explain how and by what type of state the whole inhabited world (i.e., the Mediterranean) was overpowered and forced under the rule of the Romans alone – moreover, how this was done in about half a century. This programmatic statement, then, alerts readers to expect generic and pragmatic lessons in civic behavior and to learn in particular the character and process of Roman rule. There is here no high praise for the moral values of the Romans, though this is present later, but a focus on the phenomenon of power extended widely, quickly, and effectively.

We note that Polybius differs from Herodotus and Thucydides in not naming himself or his city affiliation, yet he resembles them in offering an extensive introduction to his topic. His self-erasure recalls Xenophon’s, though his ambiguous social identity, which bridges Greek and Roman allegiances, makes his motive for silence different. It is an oversimplification to connect the habit of self-effacement with seeking to be closer to the clear (in our terms “objective”) truth: giving one’s name and state may as well be an effort at truthful transparency. Withholding one’s authorial name, as practised by some historians (for example Xenophon), is a perplexing habit for which there is no clear explanation, and indeed there may be differing reasons for each writer. Polybius seems to aim formally at subordinating his identity through a gesture of humility or avoidance of apologia (as the Roman Sallust later did), while his readers, both Greek and Roman, in fact knew who he was and (mostly) held him in high regard. Accordingly, an introductory chapter presents his

thematic concern with how the historian must not consider partisanship (*eunoia*, literally “goodwill”), and at times must speak well of enemies and criticize friends, as the context requires: “if you take truth [*alētheia*] from history, what is left of it is an unprofitable narration [*diēgēma*]” (Plb. 1.14). Yet he seems to distinguish telling the truth about valorous or vicious individuals from his firmly held and grander opinion that Roman hegemony was and is a good thing for the world.

Polybius’ introduction begins with a discourse on how the topic of Rome’s greatness is exceptional, in view of the lesser achievements of earlier “empires” (*dunasteiōn*, Plb. 1.2): Persia never succeeded outside of Asia; after Athens’ rule fell, the Lacedaemonians held sway for barely twelve years; Macedonia’s empire went far, but never extended to Sicily, Sardinia, or Libya, as Rome’s did later. Polybius’ justification for his subject has resonance with Thucydides’ claim in his preface that the Peloponnesian War was the greatest and “most noteworthy” of all wars to date and hence a worthy topic, though the focus here on the Romans’ extension of empire is a radical shift from the topic of one war, without extraordinary praise of either side.

The Roman conquest, on the other hand, was not partial. Nearly the whole inhabited world was reduced by them to obedience: and they left behind them an empire not to be paralleled in the past or rivaled in the future.

(Plb. 1.2.3, Shuckburgh)

Thucydides’ narrative is a critique of the nature of power, while Polybius’ admires the extension of Roman rule with few reservations.

Polybius’ starting point is the 140th Olympiad (220–217 BC), when events in the Mediterranean became more closely connected:

But from this time forth History becomes a connected whole: the affairs of Italy and Libya are involved with those of Asia and Greece, and the tendency of all is to unity. This is why I have fixed upon this era as the starting-point of my work. For it was their victory over the Carthaginians in this war, and their conviction that thereby the most difficult and most essential step towards universal empire had been taken, which encouraged the Romans for the first time to stretch out their hands upon the rest, and to cross with an army into Greece and Asia.

(Plb. 1.3, Shuckburgh)

Since “the majority of Greeks have no knowledge of the previous constitution, power, and achievements of Rome and Carthage,” the historian outlines them here and explains “the original intent and final success [of the Romans] in grasping universal empire and dominion.” The work thus explains and justifies the Roman path to dominion over regions that include that of the readers themselves: Greece. This leads to a discussion of the role of Fortune (Tyche) and the need to present a universal history in order to convey the

comprehensive and interconnected sense of events over decades – to see the whole body, not just the limbs (Plb. 1.4).

Finally there is a transition to the Romans' first expedition outside of Italy, to Sicily, which ultimately led to the construction of a navy (Plb. 1.5). Polybius' beginning date, carefully fixed by references, is 387/6 BC (19 years after Aegospotami, 405 BC). The year 387/6 is that of the King's Peace (or Peace of Antalcidas), just after the Gauls' capture of Rome in 390 BC. The "martial valor" (*andreia*) of the Romans is illustrated intensively in one sentence that notes their subjugation of the Latin peoples, Etruscans, Celts, and Samnites (Plb. 1.6.4). The wars with the Samnites and Celts are called "contests" (*agōnes*), virtually games to whet the Romans' skills (Plb. 1.6.6). These tests readied them to meet Pyrrhus of Epirus and ultimately expel him from Italy (274 BC). When some Mamertines of Messana appealed to Rome for help in their local dispute with Rhegium, Rome at first hesitated, in view of its ties with the other city, but ultimately helped the Mamertines, lest Carthage come to their aid in Sicily and "secure a bridgehead for an invasion of Italy." By noting "the great gains that would clearly accrue to every individual citizen from the spoils of the war," the consuls played on popular greed and passed the decree to help the Mamertines (Plb. 1.10–11). Motives of self-interest are thus transferred from the Senate to the "people" (*polloi*), with preservation of the moral temperance and restraint of the elite at this time (Champion 2004: 109). Polybius traces the beginnings of Roman imperialism here, showing how, after becoming masters of Italy, the Romans set out to the "conquest of countries farther afield" (Plb. 1.12). The two-month siege of Agrigentum (262 BC) then illustrates the Roman virtues of discipline and training: at first a few Romans kept to their guard posts and fended off the Carthaginian attack of men foraging for grain. The city fell and the Carthaginians were routed (Plb. 1.17–19). Polybius underscores the initiative and skill of the Romans, who were "filled with a desire to take to the sea and meet the Carthaginians there"; the building of their first quinqueremes, a serious naval force, demonstrated "extraordinary spirit and audacity of Romans' decision" (Plb. 1.20). "This is the first occasion when [Polybius] refers clearly not only to Roman actions, but to intentions," notes one scholar, adding:

In several passages he treats the Hannibalic War as having been their first step to the acquisition of universal power [Plb. 1.3.6; 5.104.3; 9.10.11] ... In any case it is clear that Polybius thought that desire for world conquest was the supreme aim of Rome's external policy in the period after 202.

(Harris 1979: 108)

The Romans further innovate with a "raven device" (*corvus*), a spike-like weapon on a long wooden arm, which was lowered to be fixed onto an enemy ship and to force fighting on deck (Plb. 1.22); the device surprises the Carthaginians and results in the capture of thirty ships (1.23). Rome then

plans a “D Day” type of invasion of Africa from Sicily, building two hundred or more ships; at the battle of Cape Ecnomus in Sicily (256 BC) Carthage meets it with an equally massive navy (Plb. 1.26–8). The Carthaginians lose about a half of their fleet and are heavily defeated. The Romans then land in Africa, lay siege to Aspis, and enjoy early successes, which cause the commander Regulus, unwisely, to demand harsh surrender terms for Carthage (Plb. 1.29–31). Carthage rejects this demand and commissions a Spartan mercenary, Xanthippus, to command its troops; and he, using elephants, soundly defeats Regulus, leaving only 2,000 survivors from the force of 15,000 (Plb. 1.32–4). Polybius again draws clear lessons about not relying on fortune, even after a first success; and he also credits the Carthaginian victory to the Greek mercenary (Plb. 1.35–6).

Rome recovers from the defeat and builds more ships, with some premonitory fear about a land attack with elephants (Plb. 1.38). At Panormus in northwest Sicily, Romans defeat Hasdrubal and cause his land forces with elephants to flee, exorcising the fear of those beasts (Plb. 1.40). There follows a long narrative of the siege of Lilybaeum, a crucial port in southwest Sicily (Plb. 1.41–8 and 52–6), notable for several thematic points: again, a Greek (an Achaean) saves the Carthaginians (Plb. 1.43) by reporting treason and conspiracy to them; and a certain Carthaginian Hannibal “the Rhodian” audaciously runs the Roman blockage of the harbor, pushes his luck, and is captured in the end, but not without Polybius fairly praising his courage (Plb. 1.47). Yet the Romans learned from his tactics and, since they took his unusually swift ship, they later copied its design to build a fleet like it (Plb. 1.59). Seesaw battles show one Roman commander, Pulcher, incautiously losing a naval battle off Cape Drepana; then Pullus, a consul, takes Mount Eryx north of Lilybaeum; and finally Hamilcar Barca takes Hercte near Panormus and Eryx, from which he raids the Southern coast of Italy (Plb. 1.50–6). Polybius again calls the battles “contests” (*agōnas*) and compares the two sides in Sicily to evenly matched boxers, alike in courage and physical condition; in the event, “Fortune acted like a good umpire” and narrowed the struggle to more restricted confines (exactly as happened in ancient matches that lasted too long without a decision), shutting off the Carthaginians on Mount Eryx (Plb. 1.56–7; cf. 1.6.6). Once more the historian appreciates in fairness the courage and athletic endurance of both sides. At the battle of Aegusa, the improved Roman fleet sinks fifty ships and takes seventy more captive, with a total of almost 10,000 prisoners (Plb. 1.61). Hamilcar accepted the inevitable and negotiated for peace, ending the First Punic War (Plb. 1.62). In the aftermath, Carthage goes to war with the Libyans and, although depleted in the process, extends its rule over Libya.

Book 2 moves broadly across fields of Roman conflict and concern, covering events in Illyria (Plb. 2.1–12), Cisalpine Gaul (Northern Italy; Plb. 2.14–35), and Greece (including the Achaean League and the Aetolians: Plb. 3.37–69),

with ominous brief glances at the growing Carthaginian menace in Spain (Plb. 2.1, 13, 22, and 36). The Spanish thread unifies the larger work. Hamilcar is in Spain for a decade (238–229 BC) before Hasdrubal succeeds him (Plb. 2.1), and the Romans make a treaty with him in order to focus their attention more immediately on the Gauls (Plb. 2.13). Finally Hannibal succeeds Hasdrubal, as mistrust grows in Rome (Plb. 2.35). Meanwhile the narrative of the First Illyrian War (229–228 BC) and of the battle with the Gauls at Telamon (225 BC) centers on the characterization of Illyrians and Gauls as lawless and aggressive, yet militarily capable peoples (Champion 2004: 111–12). Two figures in particular portray the Illyrian national character. Agron of Illyria had a strong navy and army when he was hired by Demetrius, king of Macedon, to help fend off a local threat to Medion from the Aetolians. Though victorious, the debauched Agron dies after an overly licentious celebratory party (Plb. 2.4). His queen, Teuta, starts her own piracy campaign on the west coast of Greece. Roman ambassadors meet with her, telling her that Rome will punish those who commit private wrongs and will help those who suffer them. Teuta responds “with womanish passion and unreasoned anger” (*gunaikothumōs kai alogistōs*) and orders an ambassador assassinated on the way home, against the “agreed upon conventions of human rights” regarding the treatment of envoys (Plb. 2.8). Aside from the issue of his ethnic bias and the typical ancient gender bias shown here, we note that Polybius deplores above all the queen’s moral and political arrogance. The Roman Senate dispatched an army under the two consuls who expelled Illyrian forces from Greek cities along the coasts, and established protection for them in future. Corcyra welcomes the Romans, whose allied faith contrasts with the Illyrians’ aggression (Plb. 2.11). Teuta agrees to a treaty with Rome and is severely restricted in permission to sail armed vessels; Aetolians and Aeolians welcome the Romans, who are honored guests at the Isthmian Games (Plb. 2.12).

Conflicts between Gauls and Romans are narrated next (Plb. 2.14–35), culminating in the battle near Faesulae, where the Romans have two consuls and a total of four legions, plus allies from the Sabines, Etruscans, and others – supposedly 700,000 infantry and 70,000 cavalry. The Romans are defeated, 6,000 being killed and the rest fleeing. A second confrontation, led by Aemilius Paulus in Etruria, ends up in a slaughter of the Gauls, who seem like noble savages, naked in the attack, horns and trumpets sounding all over: “they held their ground with unabated courage, in spite of the fact that man for man, as well as collectively, they were inferior to the Romans in point of arms” (Plb. 2.30). Some 40,000 Gauls were reportedly slain in the battle, and the invasion is repelled. The character of the conflict is summed up: measured in “audacity and desperate courage” and numbers killed, the conflict is “unsurpassed by any war in history”; but, in terms of planning by generals, the standard of generalship was “beneath contempt.” The Gauls, who were “swayed by impulse rather than by calculation” (Plb. 2.35), had numbers and

valor, while Rome had numbers and poor strategy. The victory, in Polybius' view, reflects a mixed picture of the participants.

The historian then turns to the Achaeans (Plb. 2.37–71), with a reference to his aim of writing a general history of the known peoples, not restricted to the Punic Wars. We point up a few themes as examples from this section. First, constitutions are crucial to state success: the Achaeans are united by a constitutional system of equality and genuine freedom of speech, in other words democracy, which is the foundation of their prosperity (Plb. 2.38). Second, the growth or stability of national power relates directly to the skill of individual leadership: Achaeans were respected by most Greeks as fair arbitrators – not in view of their power (*dunamin*), “which was nearly the least of the Greeks then,” but “because of their reputation for good faith [*pistis*] and high principles [*kalokagathia*]”; despite this respect, “there was no result or action leading to the increase of their own fortunes since they could not produce a leader equal to their character” (Plb. 2.39.9–12). Like earlier historians, Polybius values highly the need for the right leader, but here he interestingly fine-tunes the scheme, namely by stipulating that the leader has to come up to the values of a well-governed and trustworthy state in order to be allowed the power, presumably in material wealth, military might, and political influence. The bulk of the book deals with the so-called Cleomenean War (229/8–222 BC): the war conducted by Achaeans under Aratus and by Macedonians under Antigonus Doson against an Aetolian and Spartan alliance led by Cleomenes. The Achaean League's general Philopoemen, with his cavalry, is outstanding in his fight for freedom, and in the end Cleomenes is defeated (Plb. 2.69).

The introduction to Book 3 echoes the initial preface by recalling the main motif of how, when, and why the world was brought under Roman domination (*dunasteia*), but then it outlines the contents of Books 3 (the Hannibalic War to Cannae), Books 4 and 5 (Greek affairs under Philip V of Macedon; Antiochus and Ptolemy Philopator fighting over Syria Coele; Rhodes against the Byzantines), and Book 6 (the Roman constitution) – and also later topics down to about 167 BC, where he places the fullest extent of Roman power (Plb. 3.1–4). He adds that he will take the work further, to 146 BC, mainly to put to scrutiny the situation of those presently under Roman subordination and decide

whether they should shun or seek the rule of Rome; and future generations will be taught whether to praise and imitate, or to decry it ... the object of this work shall be to ascertain exactly what the position of the several states was, after the universal conquest by which they fell under the power of Rome, until the commotion and upheaval which broke out at a later period [*epigenomenēs tarachēs kai kinēseōs*].

(Plb. 3.4.7,12)

The mentioning of commotions and disturbances refers to the period after 152 BC (Books 35–9), whose events extend beyond the boundaries of the original narrative. The word for “upheaval” (*kinēsis*) resonates with Thucydides’ use of the same term to designate the “turmoil” of his subject, while “commotion” echoes Xenophon’s characterization of the time after Mantinea (Th. 1.1.2; X. *Hell.* 7.5.27; see Marincola 2001: 119). While Polybius alludes to prior conflicts, his own theme is uniquely complex and challenges them in greatness, he implies. His concern is to understand both intentions and final results, not just to chronicle battles or other actions for their own sake. Such self-conscious and sweeping statements about the utility of a work are taken further here than is evidenced in his predecessors.

Polybius (3.6) distinguishes the beginnings (*archas*) of the Second Punic War – the siege of Saguntum and the crossing of the river Ebro – from its causes (*aitias*) or from other pretexts (*prophaseōs*); thus he echoes Thucydides (1.23) on the “truest cause.” He then criticizes the alternative theory presented by the Roman historian Fabius Pictor, namely that the reason for the war had been Hasdrubal’s acquisitiveness and love of rule (*pleonexian kai philarchian*), which Hannibal later shared. Fabius held that the war was undertaken by those leaders without approval from the Carthaginian Senate – which is improbable, reasons Polybius, given that this body could have denied the motion to go to war instead of tolerating it for seventeen years. Using a more refined psycho-political analysis, Polybius posits the following causes: (1) Hamilcar Barca harbored resentment over the outcome of the earlier war in Sicily; (2) he was further angered at the reparations imposed; and (3) Hasdrubal and Hannibal were encouraged by success in Spain (Plb. 3.8–10). The historian adds the most dramatic explanation, in line with the above, that Hannibal as a youth had sworn an oath before his father that he would never be a friend to the Romans (Plb. 3.11). Following Hannibal’s siege of Saguntum and the Roman consideration of war against him, there is a legalistic digression into the treaties between Rome and Carthage, followed by a defensive section on the need to go into detail for the sake of a comprehensive and truthful history (Plb. 3.31). Statesmen benefit from knowledge of the past: they gain supporters, rouse others to action, ensure success, and discern who shares their sentiments. History in the absence of “cause, principle, and motive, and of the adaptation of the means to the end” leaves only “a mere panorama without being instructive,” without “abiding value.” Polybius’ defense of the lengthy and complex structure of his own work (“hard to obtain and difficult to read”) continues with a justification: his is superior to episodic compositions that do not show the interconnectedness of causes. The Third Macedonian War (171–167 BC) against the Seleucid king Antiochus III arose from the First (214–205 BC) and the Second Macedonian War (200 BC), carried out against Philip V, which in turn resulted from the Hannibalic War (218–202 BC) (Plb. 1.32). Polybius rightly insists on the interconnectedness of these conflicts, all of which come about

from Roman imperial expansion – though it is not here explicitly cited as a cause. The digression on authorial aims also serves effectively, as a dramatic pause, when we return to a dramatic scene with Roman ambassadors at the Senate in Carthage. The Roman spokesman says that in the folds of his toga he carried both war and peace and that “he would bring out and leave them whichever they bade him”; they replied, whichever he would choose, and he said: “it should be war” – which they immediately accepted (Plb. 1.33). From there the readers are transported directly back to Hannibal in Spain, with an enumeration of his forces and a description of his boldly crossing of the River Ebro. This is the textual border marking the start of the Hannibalic War. Hannibal’s forces cross the Pyrenees and then the Rhone, successfully fending off opposing Celts (Plb. 3.35–45). Remarkable is the description of the conveyance of the elephants across the Rhone, which has resonances with Xerxes’ (more spectacular) bridging and crossing of the Hellespont (Plb. 3.46, cf. Hdt. 7.30–7, 54–9; see McGing 2010: 51–94). Another sizeable authorial pause before the crossing of the Alps shows us Polybius attacking other historians who question Hannibal’s judgment in attempting the mountains and posit some divine or heroic guidance; clearly the Carthaginian was capably informed and the route was passable, as Celts had shown (Plb. 3.47–8). Polybius takes on his rivals with logic as his warrior subjects do with arms on the field. The mountain crossing took fifteen days, and the impressiveness of this achievement again serves as a narrative marker – after which Hannibal’s journey is literally and figuratively downhill for a time (Plb. 3.50–6).

As at last Hannibal faces Scipio, there is a pair of pre-battle exhortations of standard content (the invaders resolve to win or die; the defenders see a foe of reduced ranks). These frame the psyche of the opponents at the outset of the war (Plb. 3.63–4). Hannibal is characterized as acting “prudently and effectively” (*emphronōs ... kai pragmatikōs*, Plb. 3.81.1) both in his lenient treatment of prisoners, to win them over, and in his shrewd sizing up of Flaminius, who overrated himself and was not suited to the realities of warfare. This gives Polybius occasion to list the worst and best qualities of the general: disgraceful indulgence in drink or sex or, conversely, the ability to “read” an enemy commander’s weaknesses. Thus Hannibal induced Flaminius unwisely to join battle, which results in the Roman disaster at Thrasymene Lake, with 15,000 Romans killed and another 15,000 captured, by this account. The people of Rome were stunned, while the Senate considered the next move (Plb. 3.85). The general Fabius suffers another disgrace when from a commanding position he allows Hannibal to escape by means of a nighttime diversion caused by oxen with torches tied to their horns (Plb. 3.93–4). Fabius later redeems himself when he saves his co-dictator Minucius from defeat at Hannibal’s hands: Polybius portrays it, in the minds of Romans, as a case of a man of “military foresight and stable, sensible reckoning,” clearly differing from a man of “rashness and bravado” (Plb. 3.105).

The major event of this book, given due weight by the historian, is the traumatic defeat of the Romans at Cannae, which remains for long a symbol of agonizing shame and only later inspires courage to save the state. In his harangue before battle, Aemilius Paulus, in charge of eight legions and 40,000 men – 80,000, to count the allies – puts it pointedly: this is a matter of salvation of the state, the fighters' women, their children, and themselves; the whole confidence and power (*dunamin*) of the state rests on its soldiers (Plb. 3.109). An impetuous Roman attack on the Celts in battle and the superiority of the Carthaginians under Hasdrubal led to the Roman defeat, not before Paulus died in a vain and valorous charge into the ranks (Plb. 3.115–16). Polybius, however, does not dwell on this, but turns his readers to the long-range outcome. Despite being

worsted in battle and having surrendered their excellence in arms [*arete*], by the uniqueness of their constitution and by their prudent counsels, they not only retained governance of Italy, but thereafter have defeated the Carthaginians and after a few years became empowered of the whole world.

(Plb. 3.118)

The language of inevitable Roman imperial power is never left far from the readers' attention.

The narratives in Books 4 and 5 in part serve to develop the characterization of the Greeks in ways that point out their internal factionalism, implicitly promote an image of Roman superiority, and issue a challenge to Greeks to greater unity. The great attention to Hellenic matters recalls not only the Greek perspective of the author, but the interests of his mainly Greek readership. Among the revelations is the civilizing value of music, the absence of which explains the marked cruelty of the Cynaethans of Arcadia (Plb. 4.20–1). The geography of Byzantium is a prelude to the narrative of the war between Rhodes and Byzantium (Plb. 4.47–51) over tariffs imposed by the latter on those who bring goods from the Pontus. Leaders from Greek regions emerged and are chronicled: Aratus and the Achaean League in the Peloponnese (Plb. 4.7–14); the Social War of Philip V of Macedon against the Aetolians is a venture encouraged by his view of Hannibal's success (Plb. 4.26–37 and 4.57–5.24, and esp. 5.101). Perhaps most indicative of Polybius' views of the need for Greek unity is the little speech of Agelaus of Naupactus (5.104), essentially arguing for the need for peace and unity among Greeks in view of the potential domination of either Carthage or Rome. The result was the Peace of Naupactus in 217 BC, though behind Philip was the motivation to try to extend hegemony to Rome itself.

The famous Book 6 is an exceptionally long digression, traditionally of interest for its defense of the Roman "constitution," and it crucially but ambiguously epitomizes the character of that state. Ambiguously, in that it is

in part fragmentary and poses as many questions as it answers (Walbank 1972: 130–56). It begins with the nature of constitutions, then leads to an account of mixed constitutions and further “mixes” into it how Romans differ from others in their warfare and religious customs. The account starts by presenting the three simple forms of constitution – kingship, aristocracy, and democracy (Plb. 6.3.5) – and adds to it the mixed constitution, exemplified by that of Lycurgus of Sparta (Plb. 6.3.6–8). The constitutions have three corrupt forms, respectively monarchy/tyranny, oligarchy, and mob rule (ochlocracy) (Plb. 6.3.9–4.6). Polybius outlines a political cycle (*anakuklōsis*) in which the three good forms degenerate into their corrupt forms in a natural succession (*kata phusin*). Primitive monarchy begins the cycle, which also ends in monarchy: the *anakuklōsis* is monarchy, kingship, tyranny, aristocracy, oligarchy, democracy, ochlocracy, then monarchy again, and the cycle is repeated over again in time. The mixed constitution, a hybrid that incorporates elements of the three types, came about in Sparta through legislation, traditionally that of the shadowy lawgiver “Lycurgus,” and in Rome through a natural evolution (Plb. 6.10). There is then a gap in which Polybius would have described the political origins and development of Rome from Romulus to the decemvirs (450s BC), followed by an extant section on the system of checks and balances in the mixed system (Plb. 6.11–18). Throughout this discussion the concept of power is of course central in its various formulations; for example the monarch – “the man who has the greatest power” (*dunamin*) – becomes a just king when he apportions awards and penalties according to merit (*axian*). The people then obey him not out of fear or force but in approval of his judgment (*gnōmē*; Plb. 6.4.2), and they preserve his rule (*archēn*) and battle those who conspire against his exercise of power (*dunasteia*; Plb. 6.6.10). There is varying emotional and rational response to those empowered. Fairness and morality thus complement the acquisition and maintenance of power; and we should also note the nexus between power, emotion, and reason. The concept may be obvious, but it is not explicitly enunciated by Herodotus or Thucydides, though Xenophon seems sympathetic to the idea. Again, later, a constitution based solely on one form of power (*dunamin*) is unstable and quickly slips into a corrupt form (Plb. 6.10.2). The Senate, the consuls, and the people have their own power (*dunamis*), so that each is kept in balance by the others, and the *collective* power is supreme when an external threat is evident (Plb. 6.18.1–2). One scholar has suggested another point of this book, complementary to the lesson to Romans about balanced rule, namely to present to the Greeks and other readers a sober portrait of Rome “almost pathologically obsessed with detail, driven solely by the needs of the state, as willing to terrorize its own citizens as its enemies, and at heart alien”; the portrait is meant to convince non-Romans that “revolt against the Romans was madness” (Erskine 2013: 244–5).

Later sections of Book 6 describe in pragmatic detail the Roman army, its

structure and practices, in order to enlighten the Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean and impress them with the different form of high order in their system (Plb. 6.19–42). Punishments and rewards for soldiers come emphatically near the end of this section, which includes the crimes for which one should be beaten to death, decimation due to desertion, and a crown of gold for the first to scale a wall in a siege (Plb. 6.37–9). The enforcement of discipline is a key aspect of Roman success, this seems to say.

After this comes an extended comparison of the Roman republic with other states, and here Polybius draws heavily on notions of national character and ethnic identity among Greeks (Plb. 6.43–58). We learn that Athens' reversal of fortune from its imperial heights is due to its "nature" (*phusis*); Athens acts like a ship without a commander, only obeying out of "fear of the seas" in a storm but remaining otherwise contemptuous of superiors and quarrelsome; Athenians and Thebans are acting "with headstrong impulse and malice" (*oxutēti kai pikriai*) at one time and are schooled in violence and ferocity at another (Plb. 6.44). To illustrate how the Cretan constitution differs from the Spartan, which is sometimes claimed to be similar, Polybius rails against the Cretans for their very un-Spartan attachment to possessions: "To such a degree is their character [*tropos*] habitual with regard to sordid greed and arrogance that, of all humans, only among the Cretans is no gain considered disgraceful" (Plb. 6.46.3). Cretan behavior violates the common Greek dictum "nothing in excess"; but it also underlines the virtually synonymous vices of "sordid greed and arrogant acquisitiveness" (*aischrokerdeia* and *pleonexia*). This leads to a more general consideration of "the two fundamental things in each state on account of which its powers and constitutions are to be recommended or avoided: these are their customs and laws [*ethē kai nomoi*]" (Plb. 6.47.1).

Thus Polybius extends the importance of constitutional structure and of the bodies in which the powers are vested to the less controllable habits of a people, which are determined by the unique collective nature and culture of that state. Conversely, the "Lycurgan" constitution of Sparta, through provisions for land and a common diet and through training in hardship, fostered courage and temperance (*andreia* and *sōphrosunē*) (6.48). Yet in external affairs, Polybius says, Sparta had a "desire for domination" (*philarchia*) over other Greeks that forced it to become dependent on Persia for resources (Plb. 6.49). This was a constitutional flaw that, he implies, the Romans avoided by remaining self-sufficient in their external ambitions. In these passages human nature and individual character, in typical Greek polarity, waver between reason and emotion. In historical writing, the common Greek dualism was most pointedly made by Thucydides, whom Polybius follows partly here, with extensive elaboration in schema (on which see further below) and in the use of digression.

Polybius rounds off the digression with an explicit exposition on the

biological schema and relates it to the two superpowers of his narrative. Any body, state, or action (*sōma*, *politeia*, or *praxis*) has by nature (*kata phusin*) first an increase, then a highpoint, and finally decline (*auxēsis*, *akmē*, *phthisis*). With regard to constitutions, Rome is at its height, the Senate being prominent, while Carthage is in decline, as democracy prevails (Plb. 6.51.4–5). The story of Horatius at the Tiber bridge in Rome stands as a supreme example of Roman self-sacrifice for the state; Horatius shows “endurance and boldness” (*hupostasin kai tolma*), which is also typical of young Romans in whom an “enthusiasm and love of honor” (*hormē kai philotimia*) is instilled (Plb. 6.55). The end echoes the beginning of the description of the cycle: “All things are subject to decay and change” (*phthora kai metabolē*) (Plb. 6.57). When a state achieves supremacy under the influence of long-established prosperity (*eudaimonia*), “life becomes extravagant and men become highly contentious for public office and in other matters.” When people do not get what they think they deserve, out of anger and resentment they will challenge the power of others and try to have everything or by far the most for themselves. “And when that comes to pass the constitution will receive a new name, which sounds better than any other in the world, liberty or democracy; but in fact it will become that worst of all governments, mob rule” [*ochlokratia*]” (Plb. 6.57.9).

Polybius thus posits a complex “anthropology” in which the *anakuklōsis* of constitutions is further refined into the growth–acme–decline schema of each part of the cycle. The schema of decline of collective customs is not itself original, but has roots going back to Hesiod’s races of man and is articulated in political terms, as a classification of constitutions, by Plato (Book 8 of the *Republic* depicts the decay of a polity, Book 3 of the *Laws*, a growth cycle) and by Aristotle (*EN* 8.10.1–3; see Trompf 1979). Yet the Greek historian’s uniqueness in this particular respect is a highly schematized formulation of human nature, emotion, and reason in collective social movements taken to cross-cultural comparisons. It is also noteworthy in that, for all the author’s high esteem for the Roman polity both in its admirable, mixed constitution and in the stalwart and courageous character of its citizens, the picture of idealized Romans in Book 6 is not matched by ideal behavior in the text. Horatius at the bridge is touted in Book 6, but we have more problematic events, such as the commander Regulus’ defeat in Africa (Plb. 1.32–4), the Roman defeat at Cannae (Plb. 3.109–18), and the dictator Quintus Fabius’ being outmaneuvered by Hannibal (Plb. 3.93–4). Rome recovers each time, but there is an implicit warning that it could falter if it did not live up to its ancestral character.

We might pause to ask why this broad-ranging discussion is inserted at this point into the narrative. Why not put it closer to the start of the work, since it presents programmatic questions? The immediately prior books, 4 and 5, dealt with details of inter-Greek strife, and, when we last saw the Romans at any

length, this culminated in their most disastrous defeat at Cannae. Perhaps it is just at this unlikely point – namely the nadir of Roman success in the Second Punic War and the extreme disunity among the Greeks capped by Philip V's self-aggrandizing opportunism – that the digression fits best. In the ensuing narrative of how Rome redeemed itself and how the Greeks collectively did not, the reader is to keep freshly in mind the discussions of Book 6 on which the later success is premised.

Book 7 takes up affairs in Sicily and the (unsuccessful) scheming of the young Hieronymus, king of Syracuse, to obtain rule over Sicily by siding with Carthage against Rome. Polybius takes the occasion to praise Hieronymus' grandfather, Hiero, who obtained the rule (*archē*) of Syracuse through his own merit, not by fortune, and then governed in peace (Plb. 7.8). He was not allowed by his people to relinquish his sovereignty (*dunasteia*), and he lived a temperate life into old age. Back in Greece, the decline of Philip V into tyranny and aggression toward Messene are outlined next (Plb. 6.10–14), followed by the account of Antiochus' taking of Sardis (Plb. 6.15–18). The fragmentary Book 8 describes the frustrated attempts of the Roman fleet to besiege Syracuse, which are outwitted by the military technology of Archimedes (Plb. 8.3–7). Philip's assault on Messene gives an occasion for Polybius' harsh criticism of his predecessor Theopompus for his unseemly and unfair description of Philip II's immoral palace life (Plb. 8.9–11). Next, in a tale of intrigue, Achaëus, the Asian governor occupying the citadel of Sardis, is tricked and ambushed by Cretans, then handed over to Antiochus III the Great, who executes him (Plb. 8.15–21). Polybius gives the explicit lessons that one should trust no one too easily and should not boast in times of success, but, being human, be prepared for anything (Plb. 8.21.11).

At length we return to Hannibal, who executes the siege of Tarentum in 212 BC, in a compelling narrative of intrigue among the Tarentines against the Roman occupiers. The episode is reminiscent in some respects of the legendary siege of Troy, undertaken while the city was, as Virgil figuratively put it, "buried in wine and sleep" after festivities (Plb. 8.24–34; cf. Vg. A. 2.265). If there is a parallel, Hannibal is, one might argue, the new Odysseus, who devised the stratagem of the Trojan horse. Emphasis is on the resourceful and cunning plan of Hannibal, but there is implicit criticism of the Roman commander's not being more cautious. Rome ultimately redeems itself in the recovery of Tarentum (Plb. 10.1).

The Roman failure to besiege the pro-Hannibal stronghold of Capua after a standoff between the consuls and Hannibal (Plb. 9.2–10) is followed by a section (by Polybius, but seemingly displaced here from his work *Tactics*) discussing the need for a good general to have experience and knowledge from many sources (Plb. 9.12–16). Most notable in this section is the sketch of the character of Hannibal as it informs our view of the author's reading of power and human nature (see Plb. 9.22–6; compare 10.19), discussed earlier

in relation to Polybius' thematic interest in character.

A parallel assessment of Scipio Africanus, with whose family Polybius had close personal ties, comes not long after: like the Spartan Lycurgus, Scipio had a "cultural assimilationist strategy" (Champion 2004: 149–50); he shrewdly encouraged his men through the intimation of divine aid; he was beneficent, magnanimous, acute, sober-minded, and focused in his intentions on the task before him (Plb. 10.2–3). We learn later that in Spain Scipio exercised sexual restraint (Plb. 10.18–19) and that he refused the kingship title despite superhuman achievements (Plb. 10.40). The long narrative of Scipio's and Laelius' successful siege of New Carthage (Carthago Nova) is highlighted by Scipio's ingenuity, including promises of gold crowns to the first scaling the walls and the report of a vision of Neptune as the Romans' supporter (Plb. 10.7–15). Scipio's generous treatment of the Spaniards versus the Carthaginians' cruelty to them causes Polybius to muse on the proper relation of conquerors to those conquered:

And yet it is obvious enough ... that one gains power by beneficent actions, and by holding out hopes of advantage to those with whom they are dealing; and that as soon as they have got what they wanted, and begin to act wickedly and rule despotically, it is but natural that, as their rulers have changed, the feelings of the subjects should change too.

(Plb. 10.36.6–7)

The implicit general message is that the Rome of the historian's day should also take care to follow the example of Scipio and not that of Carthage in the treatment of subjects. Imperial power is based on a fair (if not equal) reciprocal dynamic between rulers and ruled. And the disposition of the state usually follows from that of the leader(s), in a parallel process in which state and individual act similarly, not by different dynamics. Finally, he observes that contradictory actions in rulers often emerge from circumstances that turn the essentially virtuous person into one forced to act more harshly than he otherwise would.

Book 12 gives insight into Polybius' own criteria for historical writing, in the context of an extended criticism of Timaeus (c. 345–250 BC) (Plb. 12.3–4, 11–15, 25, and 27). This colleague is called to task particularly on account of falsehood arising from deliberate distortion, not from ignorance. Polybius supports the accusation by dismissing *ad hominem* attacks and showing the positive qualities of Demochares (an Athenian statesman, nephew of Demosthenes), of Agathocles, king of Syracuse (who had exiled Timaeus), and of other historians. Timaeus is, he claims, not only "a carping, false, and impudent writer," but also an "unphilosophical and, in short, unlearned historical writer" (*aphilosophos ... anagōgos sungrapheos*, Plb. 12.25.6). Much of this criticism relates to Timaeus' use of inappropriate comments in narrative or inept rhetoric in set speeches (Plb. 12.25a), and even to the fact

that he lacks authority, since his history has such a narrow subject, limited to Italy and Sicily (Plb. 12.23.7). What, we may ask, is at stake here that prompts Polybius to afford such extended vituperation and vilification? Put positively, this could be simply a way to make readers aware of the distortions of a text that leaves off on the relations of Carthage with Sicily and Italy, where Polybius takes it up. Of course the rivalry also benefits the reputation of Polybius. Since Timaeus' works are not extant and we cannot ascertain the validity of many of the criticisms, we can only safely say that the comparison points up for us two authors with different styles, subjects, and ways of treating history (and biases): Polybius, with broader topics and reserved, self-conscious "objectivity"; and, Timaeus, with his more focused subjects and wider scope for the inclusion of myth, religion, marvels, and a tragic vision alongside the usual politics and warfare. Polybius' rhetorical style here is an established one of polemic, meant to provoke antipathy, and he deployed it more briefly on other historians: Phylarchus in Book 2, Chaereas and Sosylus in Book 3, Theopompus in Book 8, and Postumius Albinus in Book 39 (see Marincola 1997: 221–2; 229–32). The angry critique risks descending to the level of the one accused, but Polybius is circumspect about justifying each remark and requiring his own criticism to be useful and fair. The practice also indicates the earnestness and sharply competitive atmosphere among the throng of historians of this era (on intertextuality between Polybius and earlier historians generally, e.g. Ephorus, Timaeus, Phylarchus, Callisthenes, see Schepens and Bollansée 2005).

The end of the Second Punic War focuses on the brilliant generalship of Scipio, notably in his burning of the camps of the Numidians and Carthaginians near Utica, followed by his siege of Utica (Plb. 14.1–9). The Numidian leader Syphax is particularly susceptible to manipulation, and Hasdrubal is also taken by surprise when peace negotiations are a pretense for the Roman attack. Carthage later ambushes Roman envoys by ship, a grave offense that causes hostilities to resume. Yet Scipio restrains his anger and treats Carthaginian ambassadors courteously, upholding "the noble traditions of our fathers" by "surpassing their folly with his noble behavior [*kalokagathia*]" (Plb. 15.1–4). The set speeches of Hannibal and Scipio neatly sketch the opposing mentalities before the final battle at Zama: the Carthaginian seeks a treaty with Rome in which the latter retains all its possessions outside North Africa; the Roman rejects it on the grounds of the enemy's aggression, perfidy, and failure to seek terms before this point of desperation (Plb. 15.6–8). Exhortations before battle on both sides and a sprinkling of Homeric quotes give the narrative an epic quality of gravity and mutual valor in the struggle (Plb. 15.12–16).

A palace revolution in Alexandria dramatically portrays the inept intrigue of Agathocles, regent of the boy-king Ptolemy Epiphanes, and the plotter's eventual demise at the hands of a mob (Plb. 15.26–33). Scenes include the

mysterious escape of a man who then inspires the guards to revolt, the flight of the drunken Agathocles from the mob, and the dismemberment of the regent and his family in the stadium. Oddly, the section ends with Polybius denouncing sensationalist reports of others, who emphasize the role of chance in these events. Polybius' point is that the dissolute character of the regent, not fortune, better explains the outcome: "striking reversals of fortune" provide a representation worth listening to once; but, given the goals of profit or pleasure in the story, repeatability is crucial, especially in the historical genre (Plb. 15.36.1–4). The value of Polybius' narrative rests not in the entertaining twists, but in its pointing up the vice, virtue, emotion, and justice embodied in action.

Philip V of Macedon is consistently presented as a Greek leader who exhibits traits of arrogance, self-serving, and violent resistance to the Romans, while also antagonizing fellow Greeks. Book 18 serves as a telling example of his behavior, beginning with a conference between the Macedonian, other Greeks, and Flamininus, the Roman commander, when Philip refuses to disembark at Nicaea out of fear of the crowd. Flamininus demands his withdrawal from Greece and the return of power to other Greek states (Plb. 18.1). Philip is denounced by the other Greeks at Nicaea, notably Alexander of Issus, an Aetolian, who says that Philip is neither sincere in his offer of peace nor courageous in war, practicing a burn-and-plunder strategy at odds with the practices of his ancestor, Alexander the Great (Plb. 18.3). When Philip later replies to Flamininus that he is alone and needs to consider carefully the terms of peace from allies, the Roman wryly replies: "Of course you are alone by this time, Philip: you have killed off all the friends who could give you the best advice" (Plb. 18.7). The peace terms are put to the Senate and argued by Greek representatives who oppose Philip, appealing to the Senate "not to cheat the Greeks out of their hopes of liberty, nor to deprive themselves [the Romans] of the noblest claims of renown [as liberators of Greece]" (Plb. 18.11). Philip's men are not even allowed to speak, and the Senate votes to continue the war against Philip with Flamininus as commander in Greece. Philip suffers a major defeat and retreats at Cynoscephalae (Plb. 18.25–7), which prompts the comparison of Roman orderly formations in battle against the Macedonian phalanx. This continues the author's thematic critique of Greek versus Roman culture (Plb. 18.28–32).

Eventually a treaty is decreed by the Senate: Philip is to hand over to the Romans all Greeks subject to his rule prior to the Isthmian Games (June 196 BC); also he is to hand over all towns he occupied with garrisons, all his ships, and all Roman prisoners of war, and to pay reparations to the value of 1,000 talents. The strategically key Greek towns of Chalcis, Corinth, Demetrias, Eretria, and Oreum, the so-called "fetters of Greece" held by Philip, were to be handed over to Rome, which prompted the view among Hellenes that "the Greeks were being given not their freedom, but a change of

masters” (Plb. 18.44–5). When freedom is officially proclaimed at the Isthmian Games, the Greeks speculate which cities will be set free (the famous ones?) and which will be kept by Rome (the less glamorous but serviceable ones?). Then, at the time of the games, heralds proclaim freedom for Corinth, Phocis, Locri, Euboea, Phthiotic Achaea, Magnesia, Thessaly, and Perrhaebia. A deafening shout arises, and in the crush of joy Flamininus is almost killed. The really important thing, Polybius comments, is that the Roman people and its general incurred expense and danger to ensure the freedom of Greece, using military forces to uphold it, and without fortune intervening: “by a single proclamation all the Greeks inhabiting both Asia and Europe became free ... enjoying their own laws” (Plb. 18.46). This section seems to instruct the Greek audience that freedom was a real gift from Rome, for which the Greeks should be grateful. The suspicion of a “change of masters” seems answered by the absence of tribute or garrisons and by legal self-governance. From our perspective we may question the veracity of this view and accept rather the notion of a “change of masters.” But the fact that the historian singles out this act of Rome as one of gracious beneficence reveals the aim of his narrative. “Freedom” can be held by a subordinate power, even if in qualified terms.

The comparison between Philopoemen and Aristaenus of Achaea, two prominent Greeks who sided with Rome in the conflicts against Philip and Antiochus, illustrates two divergent responses of Greek leaders to Roman rule (Plb. 24.11–13). We know that Polybius admired Philopoemen greatly, not least from the fact that he wrote a monograph on him; Philopoemen was a family friend whose ashes the young Polybius carried in the funeral. But each leader is praised in his own way for protecting the rights of the Achaeans against the Romans at this time. Aristaenus felt that it was impossible “to hold out at once both the sword and the olive branch to the Romans”; there is a need to maintain friendship with Romans. Every policy has two aims, honor and interest; but without the necessary strength people must take refuge in securing their interest. Philopoemen’s political strategy also reflects on honor, interest, and strength, holding that it is natural for the stronger to press the weaker, but the Greeks must put up some obstacle to avoid the harshest rule. Achaeans will at least soften the harshness of Roman rule to a certain extent. The lesson that can be derived from the episodes with Philopoemen and Aristaenus is that “states with limited power have limited options; only if politicians understand this will they be able to choose courses of action realistically, and so bring benefit to his community” (Eckstein 1995: 162). This passage gives a crucial insight into Polybius’ perspective on power, namely by acknowledging the Thucydidean dictates of power politics but illustrating a more subtle principle of survival and manipulation of one’s position as the subordinate. The two Greek leaders present two approaches, each viable, one aimed at working on friendly terms, the other at “pushing back” to a degree, so that the subordinate may not become overly servile.

Other approaches to the dominant power are of course also possible, notably the ones of Philip or Antiochus: to use the sword, to become an overt antagonist. Polybius does not endorse these approaches but holds up the others as models for his contemporary Greeks. The historian “was greatly interested in what made for ‘pragmatic’ success in the world, but also ... how to reconcile pragmatic success with honourable conduct” (Marincola 2001: 141, summarizing Eckstein 1995).

Polybius himself enters as a historical agent in these later books – first in Book 31, when he aids the escape of a would-be regent of Syria, against Senate orders (Plb. 31.11–15). Scipio Aemilianus, as a friend of Polybius, allows the Greek to remain in Rome when other Achaeans are sent to provincial towns. Examples of Scipio’s early enthusiasm, generosity, and fairness point to the Roman’s admirable aim of living a virtuous life, which Polybius fostered (Plb. 31.24). The digression serves not only to set a model for others, but to establish credibility for the account of Scipio’s future actions (Plb. 31.30).

The account of the Third Punic War begins in Book 36, with Carthage sending envoys to the Roman commanders, surrendering hostages, and giving a promise to comply with orders (Plb. 36.1–6). Polybius then turns to Greece and shows the Greeks discussing the question of whether Rome was wise to destroy Carthage or was corrupted and has become power-hungry (Plb. 36.9). Interestingly, the question seems to be posed primarily for the Greek audience: the views in Greece about the effects of the war are said to be many and varied (*logoi ... polloi kai pantoioi*), which echoes Hecataeus’ broad critique of earlier Greek histories. Some, Polybius says, think that the Romans pursued policies for their empire (*dunasteia*), in an intelligent and practical manner; they removed the overhanging fear of the other city disputing their hegemony and secured the rule of wise and provident people. Others think that Romans gradually abandoned their principles, “turning towards the same craving for power [*philarchian*] that had afflicted the Athenians and Spartans, and although they started later than these two states, all the indications were that they would arrive at the same goal” (Plb. 36.9, Scott-Kilvert). They further maintain that, while dealing with the Carthaginians, the Romans practiced deceit and fraud, more the intrigues of despots than the constitutional actions of Rome. This cynical Roman view has resonances with the Thucydidean and Herodotean theme of the natural law of imperial rule. Yet Polybius gives the favored last argument to those who maintain that the Romans were not guilty of any of three categories of crime: impiety against gods, parents, or ancestors; treachery in written or sworn agreements; and injustice toward laws or customs. The Carthaginians are the ones who had broken oaths and treaties, while the Romans acted legally and in good faith. The historian raises here what must have been concerns he heard voiced by fellow Greeks with the aim to counter them and to suggest that Roman

hegemony is a positive and stabilizing force in the Mediterranean. Polybius also seems to reject the explanation that Romans are boundlessly imperialistic, but he implies that they are a superpower with a difference. Rome is now clearly the dominant Mediterranean power, but it is not, he implies, tyrannical in administration of power.

The narration of the final defeat of Carthage in Book 38 gives the author occasion for reflection on the relative fates of Carthage and Greece, Greece's being worse, since its people had to live on with the memory of their traumatic self-defeat. The common misfortune of all the Greeks who successively held and lost power resulted

not merely from the number of defeats they suffered, far from it; but, by their whole conduct, they brought on themselves no misfortune, but a disaster and disgrace as discreditable as it could be. For they showed both faithlessness and cowardice and brought on their heads all this trouble.

(Plb. 38.3.10–11)

The end story of Carthage, the main topic of this section, reveals the self-centered “cowardice and ignobility” of the commander Hasdrubal (Plb. 38.8.10), recalling by contrast the shrewd and courageous Hannibal. When the city is taken, Hasdrubal flees to Scipio for mercy but receives instead mockery from the general – and indeed scorn from his own wife, whom Hasdrubal had abandoned with the children. Scipio says later to Polybius: “A glorious moment, Polybius; but I have a dread foreboding that some day the same doom will be pronounced on my own country” (Plb. 38.21). Reflecting, at the moment of triumph, on the possible reversal of fortune for oneself is the mark of a “great and perfect man” like Scipio (Plb. 38.21); the Roman recites Homer (*Il.* 6.448–9) on the fall of Troy. This is a sublimely dramatic conclusion to the Punic Wars, reflecting the best side of human sympathy for fellow humans, as Achilles does at the end of the *Iliad*.

Conclusions

Polybius' work occupies a crucial position in the stream of Greek historical writing, as important in its way as the histories of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon. First, his history is unique in being the only lengthy extant second-century BC account of the rise of Rome to power; and it is written by a personal witness to many of the events and by one in the company of the Roman elite. Second, the author is a Greek among Romans, and writing in Greek for the two major audiences of Greeks and Romans who read Greek; he literally and figuratively “translates” events for both sides at once. He can

praise and caution Romans in their acquisition of empire, and he can remind non-Romans of the enormous cultural attributes that brought them to power. But he explains to the subordinates what they have to acknowledge by maintaining their own degree of honor and independence as much as they can, through gestures of friendship or nonviolent resistance. Numerous Greek historians after Polybius emulate his “balancing act” in narrating history under Roman hegemony. And, finally, Polybius’ work is special through the quality of its ideas, which emulate the keen perceptions and techniques of his predecessors but go beyond them through subtle observations of how character works individually and in peoples, and how military and political changes evolve when Rome clashes with diverse peoples.

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Greek Historians in the Roman Era

Greek Literature in a Roman Context

Not surprisingly, historical writing in the Roman era evidences an ever more vigorous “throne of authors,” both Roman and Greek (see Sallust’s *tanta scriptorium turba*, Sall. *Hist.* fr. 1.3), who receive earlier forms, methods, and styles and create novel ones. But the Greek authors must always keep one eye on their Roman masters in formulating and writing their narratives. In sum, the political realities of power more than ever dictated topics, shaped the treatment of them, and severely limited the freedom of speech.

The Greek historians treated here will consist of nine major figures over the four-century period beginning with the second Punic War (218–201 BC), namely Fabius Pictor, Posidonius, and Diodorus Siculus of the late republic; Nicolaus of Damascus and Dionysius from the Augustan age; Josephus, Appian, and Arrian of the first and second centuries AD; and finally Dio Cassius and Herodian in the early third century AD, before the late Roman period. Given the number of authors and the length of their texts, the treatment here will necessarily be more concise than that given earlier writers. A whole separate book could and perhaps should be afforded these historians. But it is important to include them here, not least to trace the continuities and shifts in the topics and themes followed in earlier historians, in particular the narratives of how public power is acquired and managed and how human nature weighs crucially in their accounts. Chronologically Polybius should belong at the start of this chapter, but was treated separately in view of his exceptional importance and originality.

Universal history was the most important new genre, made compelling by the Roman conquest of the Mediterranean. The topic was opened up by Timaeus and developed by Polybius. Stoicism and the power of the common good lent a unifying theme. Diodorus Siculus used the theme of individual civilizing benefactors, and Posidonius suggested the civilizing benefit of Roman rule. Christian authors like Augustine transformed this theme for religious ends, so that it reached its pure acme by abandoning time-bound narrative for apocalyptic and prophetic revelation, envisioning the “end of history” (Sacks 1996; Momigliano 1987). We note here in passing the ethnographies, akin to history, that were produced to explain the newly conquered lands of the era and led to the works of Strabo (65 BC to after AD 21), Pausanias (fl. c. AD 150), and others (Engels 2007: 541–52). We also only mention the other great

historically related genre, biography, epitomized by Plutarch (c. AD 50–120) but flanked by the Latin authors Nepos (110–124 BC) and Suetonius (AD 70–130) (Stadter 2007: 528–40).

Along with more global genres and the increasing power of Rome, the relations between authors and authorities became more sensitive. Tacitus keenly observed how the transition from republic to empire deeply affected the credibility and skill of historians, both Greek and Roman, in each era:

For many authors have recounted the eight hundred and twenty years of the earlier period after the founding of the city, while the affairs of the Roman people were recalled with equal eloquence and liberty. After the battle at Actium occurred [31 BC] and it became important to transfer all power to one man, those great talents withdrew. At the same time truth was broken down in many ways, first out of ignorance of public affairs as if they were foreign, then through a passion for flattery or again a hatred toward the ruling masters.

(Tac. *Hist.* 1.1)

For historians writing in Greek in this period, the target audience would have been mainly fellow Greek speakers of the Eastern Mediterranean, and probably the elite of the Western half who were educated in Greek, for example politicians like Sulla, Cicero, and most emperors (Marincola 2009). Polybius was exceptionally well balanced in his praise and critique of Rome. But in general Tacitus' analysis begs the question of whether native Greek writers flattered their Roman rulers and magistrates, or else subtly challenged or encouraged them to learn ways of rule that were fair and sympathetic to Greek communities. Where each Greek historian lies on this spectrum cannot be easily determined, but the Roman–Greek tensions did and do challenge readers to consider the questions. A history covering even much earlier periods does of course convey implicit models for good and bad uses of power and treatment of fellow citizens and subjects. The choice of subject (universal or Roman-centered, specific peoples or conflicts or pan-Mediterranean events, etc.) will suggest the approaches and aims of the authors. Why was new research on contemporary events diminished or abandoned? Arrian and Diodorus, for instance, mostly reworked accepted traditional sources, with widely varying quality and results (Diodorus' contemporary history is sadly fragmentary). The context of the author and his life and times also yield insights into his aims.

Fabius Pictor

Though we have only fragments of Fabius' work, he is, crucially, the first Roman historian and he wrote entirely in Greek. His chronicle dealt with

Rome from its origins, starting with Aeneas, and ended with an account of the Second Punic War (for details, see Mehl 2011: 43–8). He was from the distinguished Fabian family, was a member of the Senate, fought in the Second Punic War against the Gauls in 225 BC, and was sent on an embassy to Delphi in 216 BC, after the disastrous Roman defeat at Cannae. His choice of Greek was partly due to the lack of literary Latin prose models (Cato the Elder blazed that trail not long after) and partly in aid of justifying the Roman expansion to the Eastern Mediterranean (Dillery 2009). For early Roman events, Fabius uses the third-century BC Greek historian Diocles of Peparethus, author of an early history of Rome, and may have gleaned from Timaeus the system of dating by Olympiads, cultural asides, and archival detail. Not only did he rely heavily on oral traditions – including family funeral orations – but his work may even have been the first crystallization of many of them into writing (Ungern-Sternberg 2011; Marincola 1997: 100; Cornell 1986: 124).

Fabius of course blamed Hamilcar Barca and Hannibal for the Punic Wars. Hannibal was in fact accompanied by his own Greek historians, who were there to propagate his fame, and therefore Fabius and his slightly later contemporary also writing in Greek, Cincius Alimentus, countered Hannibal's writers (Ungern-Sternberg 2011: 146–7). Especially for his account of the first two Punic Wars, but also for that of earlier Rome, Fabius was used as a source by Polybius, Livy, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. His work had been translated into Latin by the time of Cicero (Momigliano 1990: 91–2).

Polybius (1.14–15) faults Fabius for being too staunchly pro-Roman in his account of the Punic War. Fragment 1 (possibly derived from the historian Diocles of Peparethus; see also D.H. 1.79–84) tells the story of Romulus' and Remus' identity being revealed to their father and their revenge against the usurper, King Amulius – a tale of the characteristic bravado of Romulus, Rome's founder. Fabius is again used to show that even before Greek domination the Romans held the same sacred rites – evidence that they were not “barbarians” in Greek terms (fr. 11 = D.H. 7.70–1). Elsewhere Dionysius of Halicarnassus quibbles about details in Fabius' account, but obviously relies on his text throughout his own books on early Rome – *Roman Antiquities*. Fabius' primary legacy was to Roman historiography, where successors freely relied on Greek historians for the style or the substance of their works: for example, Sallust used Thucydides as Livy did Polybius. But Fabius also stimulated an academic-like inclination to write books from books, without examining the primary material for earlier events. After Fabius, Latin historians took up writing Roman – that is, “national” – history but remained under the spell of the Greek predecessors, constantly emulating them (Momigliano 1990: 106–8).

Posidonius

The rise and dominance of Rome remained central to Greek historians in this period. Posidonius (c. 135–50 BC) was from Apamea, a Greek city of Syria, but he lived mostly in Rhodes, a cultural center of the times. He is unique among historians for being also a major Stoic philosopher – a student of the famous Panaetius of Rhodes – and a polymath. His works also covered politics, geography, and astronomy. His *Histories*, now only fragmentary, was a continuation of Polybius’ work of the same title and covered the period 148–88 BC in fifty-two volumes, (Edelstein and Kidd 1988–99). To judge from Dionysius, who probably followed him closely, his perspective on this period seems to involve a negative view of the “populists,” namely the Gracchi, Marius, and others; he was more favorably inclined toward the elite, for example magistrates who governed well (Pelling 2007: 251), but he could be nuanced. Like Herodotus, he structured the narrative by nations (Celts, Germans, Arabia, Syria, Egypt, etc.) rather than chronologically and was amenable to philosophical perspectives on people. There are numerous accounts of luxurious living, presumably designed to censure the weakness of human nature, as Athenaeus records them in his *Philosophers at Dinner* (Ath. 4.36–8 = Posidon. frs. 1, 5, 12, 15, 18); yet the preserved accounts may distort our view, since Athenaeus’ is largely interested in luxury. Posidonius reflects on imperial authority too, for instance in Fragment 36, on Athenion – the tyrant in Athens who is dismissive of Rome and will suffer for this (Pelling 2007: 251). We can only speculate on how Posidonius’ Stoicism reflected on Rome, perhaps seeing its power as a boon to the world, in step with nature and reason. He may also have been prescriptive, pointing out how the dominant nation needs to exercise rational humanity without being overtly critical. Arguably not since Thucydides was a historian so focused on human causation, though of course Posidonius as a Stoic posited an overarching harmony, in which reason created order and human emotions caused disruption. Seneca records Posidonius’ belief in a “golden age,” which reflects his ideal society, governed by “the wise,” who “protected the weaker from the stronger” and acted beneficently and with providence; the ruler never “tried his power against those to whom he owed the beginnings of his power; and no one had the inclination, or the excuse, to do wrong, since the ruler ruled well and the subject obeyed well” (Sen. *Ep.* 90, Gummere 1917). When vice and tyrannies arose, Solon and the other seven sages established laws. Posidonius’ history, then, is heavily tempered by a very un-Thucydidean view that human reason and law can redeem individuals and that a class of wise rulers can overcome human weaknesses. Sallust and other Roman historians were attracted to Stoic ethics, which neatly fits many Roman views on moral excellence (*virtus*) and on Rome’s moral slippage after the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC (Earl 1961: 47).

Diodorus Siculus

Diodorus Siculus (fl. 60–30 BC) followed a genre that is now termed “universal history,” that is, an account of noteworthy events that can go from earliest times to the present and can roam all over the known world. It was entitled *Historical Library*, on account of Diodorus’ apparent (and often overstated) reliance on secondary sources and of his intention for the work to replace a whole historical library. He undertook a research on a trip to Egypt about 60–56 BC, before settling in Rome to complete the *Library*. The now fragmentary Ephorus and Theopompus were his predecessors, but, happily in Diodorus’ case, we have Books 1–5 and 11–20, ending in 302 BC, and unfortunately nothing about the rise and later struggles of Rome, which began with the First Punic War in his Book 23. Books 1–6 cover the period down to the end of the Trojan War; Egypt is discussed in Book 1 and India in Book 2, from different authors’ accounts. The following sources for this narrative can be conjectured but not be known for certain. Ephorus seems to be his main source for the narrative covering the classical Greek period (Books 11–15); Timaeus for Sicily during 480–288 BC (Books 11–21); Polybius for much of the later Roman era, 171–146 BC (Books 28–32); and Posidonius for 146–88 BC (Books 33–8). Cleitarchus may be his source for Alexander (Book 17), but this is disputed; and Hieronymus for Alexander’s successors (Books 18–20). Books 11–20 are invaluable, as they constitute the only continuous account of the years 480–302 BC.

The independence and the innovativeness of Diodorus’ narratives have been questioned and the narratives themselves have been called pastiche-like; one scholar opines that “the cardinal fact about Diodorus is that he was a second rate epitomator [*sic*] who generally used first-rate sources” (Stylianou 1998: 1). And yet Diodorus’ preface shows a serious approach; he has his own views and is not entirely a slave to his sources. He claimed to have traveled widely in Egypt, Asia, and Europe and spent thirty years writing (D.S. 1.4.1). He did put care into the selection and representation of events (Sacks 1990, 1994). Diodorus prized his stories, which he told from start to finish, being overly strict about the chronological sequence of events in diverse places. He defended his choice while some moderns disparaged it, but in the end his selection shows an earnest concern with “true arrangement” for the sake of revealing the human character (D.S. 20.43.7; Marincola 2007: 177).

In his preface to Book 1 Diodorus promotes the mainly didactic function of his history: to teach through the experience of the past. Historians serve as “ministers of Divine Providence” (*hupourgoi tēs theias pronoias*), which “brings together the arrangements of the visible stars and the natures of humans together into one common relation” (D.S. 1.1.3). His philosophy is aligned with Stoic views of Providence governing human and natural affairs. The influence of Posidonius has been seen here, but links go back to Polybius and Herodotus.

Undoubtedly the tumultuous Roman civil strife of the decades prior to 30 BC suggested and shaped the events that Diodorus adopts in his narratives. The progress of empires is one major unifying theme of his work, as it was for Polybius and others before him, but it has a different emphasis – namely on the idea that the beneficent rule inspires loyalty in subjects and harsh rule leads to the failure of imperial power (Sacks 1994: 216–32). In Diodorus’ narrative of the classical period in Books 11–16, Athens was described as first moderate to its subjects, then severe – a change that provoked rebellion. Diodorus points up episodes in which a warring state uses unjust or questionable means to an end; and, using Ephorus, he omits Thucydidean subtleties regarding the use of power. Diodorus evidences no nuance (and makes no mention of Diodotus) in the Mytilenean debate (D.S. 12.55) – speeches that, for pragmatic reasons, are central to Thucydides’ characterization of a more merciful empire. His account of the Plataeans, in line with Thucydides’, says that they were slain by the Spartans and “unjustly incurred the greatest misfortunes because of their very firm alliance with Athens” (D.S. 12.56). Brasidas convinced the Acanthians to revolt against Athens, “partly terrifying and partly persuading [them] with benevolent arguments” (D.S. 12.67) – a harsher view of the general than in Thucydides. Subject states suspected that the Spartan–Athenian alliance was made after the Peace of Nicias, “for the purpose of the enslavement of the other Greeks” (D.S. 12.75). Athens’ brutal execution of the inhabitants of Scione is held up as an example of a city ruling over its subjects by fear (D.S. 12.76), a point only glossed over by Thucydides (Th. 5.32) – just as Diodorus barely mentions the slaughter of the Melians (D.S. 12.80), so focal in his predecessor’s narrative. A brief summary of the debate over the Sicilian expedition is offered, highlighting Nicias’ call for restraint of imperial expansion: so long as Athens “cannot obtain hegemony [*hēgemonian*] over the Greeks, how could they hope to acquire the largest island in the inhabited world?” (D.S. 12.83–4). After the Athenian defeat in Sicily, Diodorus includes a (for him) remarkably long debate (D.S. 13.20–32) in direct speech between an otherwise unknown wise man, the old Syracusan Nicolaus, who advocates moderation in victory (“clemency in success is a unique mark of the excellence of fortunate men,” D.S. 13.22.6), and the Spartan Gylippus, whose advice is opposite (“let those who choose an unjust war endure its terrible consequences,” D.S. 13.29.5). The reader sympathizes with the old Nicolaus, who cites religious reasons as well, and thus Diodorus implicitly recommends contemporary statesmen to show mercy to the subjects. Thucydides, on the other hand, completely omits this debate (and its point), since it is alien to his depiction of Athens’ tragic sufferings (Th. 7.86). In effect Diodorus’ debate, which points up Spartan harshness, is the counterpoint to Thucydides’ Mytilenean debate and Melian dialogue, which critique Athenian harshness. Diodorus’ Peloponnesian War contrasts sharply with that of Thucydides: both foreground power struggles, but Diodorus (following Ephorus?) seems more

focused on Spartan than on Athenian imperialism, uses speeches only exceptionally, to highlight motives, and moves more evenly among the different states involved in the war. Sparta followed a similar course of good will, then harshness, during and after the Peloponnesian War (Sacks 1994: 216–17; 1990: 42–54). He moralizes through critiques of the regime of the Thirty imposed on Athens by Sparta and of Sparta's brutal politics later on; he assesses character in its individual and collective manifestations; and he considers rulers' goodwill to subject states and public benefactions among citizens as the keys to human progress (Marincola 2007: 178).

That Diodorus directly applied to Rome his rule of the restrained use of power can be seen in the fragment at the beginning of Book 32, which covers Roman actions in 150–145 BC:

Those whose object is to gain dominion [*hēgemonias*] over others use courage and intelligence to get it, moderation and consideration for others to extend it widely, and paralyzing terror to secure it against attack. The proofs of these propositions are to be found in attentive consideration of the history of such empires [*dunasteias*] as were created in ancient times as well as of the Roman domination that succeeded them.

(D.S. 32 fr. 2, Walton, 1982)

This poem does not praise Roman power by comparison with that of other empires, as Polybius had done earlier and Dionysius and Appian will do later. There may be implicit criticism of, or at least a caution to, Roman rulers through his silence. Diodorus later relates the debate over the fate of Carthage, Cato advocating destruction and Scipio Nasica warning that this will result in Rome's becoming more imperialistically acquisitive – and to its detriment (Books 34–35.33). Thereafter the Italian Social Wars mark the beginning of uncontrolled conduct, license, and luxury – conditions that continue to the time of Diodorus (Sacks 1994: 218). The prologue to Book 32 continues with an unflattering description of Roman colonization through terrorism:

Because of their surpassing humanity, therefore, kings, cities, and whole nations went over to the Roman leadership [*hēgemonian*]. But once they held power [*archēn*] over nearly the whole inhabited world, they confirmed their rule by fear [*phobōi*] and by the destruction of the most outstanding cities.

(D.S. 34.4.5)

Near the end of his work Diodorus endorses Pompey's benevolent rule of Sicily (38–39.20) and shows high regard for Caesar, but mentions Octavian only once (namely his retaliation against Tauromenium in Sicily, 16.7.1; see Green 2006: 237–41). And so his political position was fragile.

Diodorus' paradigm for the decline of power is unlike those of others in that he does not, like Thucydides, cite internal corruption and imperial overreach

as main concerns. He posits rather a “ruler–subject paradigm,” arguing that fair and kind treatment of subject states leads to the retention of power: not a surprising a theory, considering that it comes from an “outsider” Sicilian with an anxious relation to Rome (Sacks 1994: 220). This is ultimately for Diodorus also a philosophical position where power is dictated by a Stoic notion of a transcendent Providence that ultimately works in harmony with the good and handicaps the foolish.

Greek Historians of the Imperial Period

Over the first two centuries of the Roman empire a series of significant authors appear, all in the Eastern Mediterranean and all consorting with the highest ranks of the Roman elite, often honored by the emperor. The critique of the contemporary regime is absent, muted, or obliquely present in “lessons” of power gleaned from earlier states and leaders.

An early figure of note is Nicolaus of Damascus (c. 64 BC–before AD 6), a Peripatetic polymath and admirer of Aristotle, who first served as tutor to the children of Antony and Cleopatra, then went to Herod the Great’s court, intervening for Herod with Augustus in 7 BC, working with Herod until the king’s death (14–4 BC), and finally moving to Rome where, favored by Augustus, he helped Herod’s son come to the throne. Herod first encouraged Nicolaus to write history, saying that “it was most politic and useful, especially for a king, to investigate the deeds and actions of kings before him” (Nic.Dam. fr. 3). His massive *Histories*, extant only in fragments, is a universal history in 144 books starting with early Assyria and covering world history down to 4 BC, the most ambitious such work since that of Ephorus. Books 1–7, from which more extensive fragments are preserved, deal with the Near East and early Greece. From Books 8–144 smaller fragments survive (the last book deals with events of 4 BC), but Books 123–4, on Herod the Great, are the main source for Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities* 14–17 and are based on Nicolaus’ personal experiences and on the king’s memoirs. Nicolaus also wrote a panegyric *Life of Augustus* from which we have mainly descriptions of Octavian (named “Augustus” after 27 BC) as a boy, of Caesar’s assassination, and of some of the conflict between Octavian and Antony (Spoerri 1979). No author has ever been closer to the source of power, and it is unfortunate that we lack his work for the latest period of his life in Rome. Nicolaus’ successful career was in a sense a model for later authors, who were anchored in scholarship of the Eastern empire and safely in step with imperial affairs reflected in their texts. We can only speculate whether, in his biography of Augustus, the historian emulated the historians of Alexander and sought to put the emperor into a similar historical orbit (Bellemore 1984).

Dionysius of Halicarnassus

A kind of Hellenomania spread in Italy in the late republic and continued into the empire, a trend in which it was highly fashionable for the Roman elite to be educated in Greek culture, especially literature and the arts. “Captured Greece captured her wild conqueror and brought the arts to rustic Latium” (Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.156–7): this poetic truism epitomized decades of emulation in architecture, visual arts, and literature, certainly including historical writing. On the heels of Diodorus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus arrived in Rome right after Actium (31 BC), when Octavian had secured power (D.H. 1.7). Twenty-two years later, about 8 BC, he published his great history, *Roman Antiquities*, in twenty books, of which the first eleven are preserved, but the rest are fragmentary (Mehl 2011: 114–16). Herodotus’ compatriot was obviously a bookish scholar claiming an exhaustive and meticulous reading of Greek and Latin authors, steeped in rhetorical studies, and friend to many other intellectuals of the city (D.H. 1.7; Schultze 2000: 19–30, §§ 3–5; Laird 2009). He published an important treatise, *On Thucydides*, which is replete with observations on style and syntax and put the Athenian historian in the stream of tradition as then understood (Pritchett 1975). It also judges Thucydides inferior to Herodotus in chronology, in the organization of narrative, and in aiming at an audience too small and elitist (Gabba 1991: 65–9). The author offers an extensive critique of Thucydides’ Melian dialogue and its appeal to a law of human nature, namely rule by the stronger (Th. 5.105). Dionysius says that the meaning of these words is “difficult to guess” (D.H. *Th.* 40), that such harsh words are unfitting for Greeks to speak to one another and not in line with Athenian character otherwise, and that Thucydides has distorted the facts out of bitterness, during his exile (D.H. *Th.* 37–41). Dionysius then shows greater concern for what is “fitting” rhetorically than for what may be true politically (Fox 1993: 37–8), and in his great history he affirms that the strongest do rule, but can only maintain an empire when also acting with moral rectitude.

Dionysius reveals his name only at the end of the preface of *Roman Antiquities* (1.7), putting topic before self, in contrast to most predecessors. The work emulates Thucydides’ narrative on the rise to power of a great state, yet Dionysius stresses the differences of Rome and ultimately its more enduring and memorable empire (*hēgemonia*) “in its displaying greatest power [*archē*] and its most splendid deeds in peace and war,” greater than the deeds of Persia and Macedonia, and far more impressive than those of Athens or Sparta at their peak (D.H. 1.2; Schultze 2000: 11). Dionysius’ whole work may be seen as an extended “archaeology” akin to Thucydides’ prehistory and

fifty-year sections in Book 1. The Roman subject offers a “definitive ‘archaeology’ of that Universal History which is the synthesis of all previous histories” (Schultze 2000: 18). Dionysius’ prehistoric “archaeology” traces the causation behind and the character of the rising state; it works well in Greek since the meanings “beginning,” “cause,” and “rule” all overlap in the single term *archē*.

Dionysius’ work also has the explicit and original aim of establishing the descent of Romans from the Greeks, another theme of his *Antiquities*. It thus strengthens the historical ties of kinship and customs between his Greek and Roman audiences: “in this book I shall make clear that [the founders of Rome] were Greeks and came together from peoples not the smallest nor least considerable” (D.H. 1.5). In the claim of Roman greatness Dionysius establishes a theme of his work and echoes Polybius. Indeed the *Antiquities* ends where Polybius begins – in 264 BC, with the First Punic War – and gives his readers the “prequel” to the origins of Roman power in its foundation legends. He means to dispel the view of Greeks generally, and even of Greek historians, that Rome’s humble beginnings were not worthy of record (D.H. 1.4). Moreover, he wants to reinforce Thucydides’ view of power politics in order to show the Greeks that they are subordinate because they deserve to be so “by nature”:

[I write so the Greeks] may neither feel indignation at their present subjection, which stands to reason (for it is a common law [*nomos*] of nature, which time cannot destroy, that the stronger always govern the weaker), nor denounce their fortune for having wantonly bestowed upon an undeserving city an empire so great and already of so long continuance. They shall have learned from my history that Rome from the very beginning, immediately after its founding, produced infinite examples of virtue [*aretas*] in men whose superiors, whether for piety or for justice or for life-long self-control or for warlike valour, no city, either Greek or barbarian, has ever produced.

(D.H. 1.5, Cary, adapted)

A sobering message to fellow Greeks, this has the simultaneous effect of gaining favor from the Roman elite; but, by mentioning Rome’s many superlative “virtues of men,” Dionysius sets a high bar against which contemporary Romans will measure themselves.

The Greek origins of the Roman and Latin peoples have been expounded and Romulus is presented as ruler by the end of Book 1. This literally establishes a kinship with Greeks for Roman readers and a kinship with Romans for Greek readers – likely the main audience (Gabba 1991: 79–80). The institutions and early exploits of Romulus come in Book 2, and from there everything up to Book 4, chapter 53 is devoted to the stories of the first other six kings. The end of Book 4 treats the expulsion of the royal Tarquins and the establishment

of republican institutions. Like Thucydides, Dionysius is aware of the unreliability of the earliest legends (gotten largely from Roman authors), and so he filters them through criteria of evidence (monuments, documents, etc.), reasoned argument, and credibility (Schultze 2000: 42–5).

Dionysius follows Ephorus' and Theopompus' more global topics and methods and in some ways what he does is in spirit of Thucydides and Polybius, yet he goes beyond them. He is important for his originality in source usage, and he contradicts the tendency of many predecessors to narrate more recent events and not to give events of the distant past sufficient scrutiny. The foundations of Rome's greatness, the concord over a mixed constitution, and the consanguinity and similar values of Romans and Greeks make sharp political points that are in line with the new Mediterranean under Augustus. One good example of how the *Antiquities* functioned is found in the account of Romulus' "third policy" (D.H. 2.16–17), which substantially helped "raise Romans to their position of supremacy" – namely a policy of not slaying the conquered peoples but colonizing their lands, and even granting Roman citizenship to some. Dionysius compares this liberality unfavorably with the stinting attitude of the Greek cities. Imperialism is grounded by the founder and a model held up to the current Greeks. Other implicit warnings lurk in the text, for instance in the speech of Menenius Agrippa denouncing sedition and factionalism (D.H. 6.83–6; see Pelling 2007: 84). Appius Claudius condemns the inversion of values that comes during civil strife in terms closely reminiscent of Thucydides (D.H. 53.6; cf. Th. 3.82). The lessons were well recalled by Romans who recently emerged from their own bloody civil war. By extending Polybius' account back in time, Dionysius is fundamentally saying that origins, their lessons and values, matter as much as the building of empire.

The Empire and the Biographic Turn

The next major extant Greek historian appears at the end of the Julio-Claudians, after the imperial form has set in and criticism of empire is further muted. Latin historians seemed to lead the genre, exemplified in the extant works of Livy, Velleius Paterculus, and Tacitus. But in this era the praise of Rome, its emerging empire, and its virtuous ancestors give way to emperor-centric narratives; for example Pliny's *Natural History* and Josephus' works were dedicated to Titus (Kraus 2005: 182–3). The shift in historical perspectives also led to a Greek and Roman biographical trend evident in panegyric (Velleius), in straight biographies (Suetonius and Plutarch), and even in history that revolves around monarchs past, present, and to be. The increase in the power vested in individuals obviously led this trend. There is no clear line between the genres of biography and history if we follow

Aristotle's dictum that history is "what Alcibiades did and suffered" (Arist. *Po.* 9.4, 1451^b), yet space requires us to sidestep pure historical biographies, which had been evident since Xenophon's *Agésilas* and (with a nod to the Latin works, Cornelius Nepos' *On Famous Men*, Tacitus' *Agricola*, and Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars*) had come to fruition with Plutarch's historical *Lives*, *Lives of the Caesars*, and *Parallel Lives* (Stadter 2007: 528–40). Plutarch (c. AD 46–120) visited Rome frequently, befriended the elite, was made a citizen, and dedicated his *Parallel Lives* to a senator during Trajan's period. His *Lives of the Caesars* went from Augustus to Vitellius (27 BC–AD 69), though only Galba and Otho (written c. AD 75–96) are extant, but the forty-six *Lives* are his extant masterpiece, ranging from Theseus and Romulus to Antony and Cleopatra (30 BC). The Greek lives include Spartan and Athenian figures, as well as Alexander and Philpoemenon (182 BC), while the Roman lives highlight the crisis of the late republic. The project requires readers to compare Greek and Roman leadership, values, and culture in a more focused way than the other historians of this period do with traditional narrative. The use of power remains a concern with Plutarch, but its application is limited to the individual lifespan.

Josephus

We know more about Josephus' views and experiences than most, owing to his publication of his *Life*, less an autobiography than a mixture of military-political memoir and moral and religious self-defense (Schaller 1979). Titus Flavius Josephus (AD 37/38–c. 100; born Yosef ben Mattityahur) was an aristocratic Jewish priest and Pharisee and at first a Jewish leader who walked a fine line with the Romans. Yigael Yadin, the excavator of Masada, famously called him "a great historian and a bad Jew," though others have seen him as a strong defender of the importance of Jews in history and a chronicler of a tragic war triggered by Jewish factionalism and "tyrannical" Jewish leadership (J. *BJ* 1.4; see Mason 2005: 256; Raphael 2013: 177; Chapman 2009; Mehl 2011: 157–62). About AD 64–6 Josephus went to Rome under Nero in a delegation and successfully won the release of some captive Jewish priests. There, as he tells us in his autobiography, he met a favorite actor of Nero's, nicknamed Aliturus ("Mr. Salty Cheese"), and through him he met Nero's wife Poppaea Sabina (J. *Vit.* 13–16). Thereafter he did not favor resistance to Roman rule, which he felt was ordained by God. He was in charge of Galilee (J. *BJ* 2.568–646) and, as a Jewish general, he was besieged at Jotapata by Vespasian (AD 67), captured, then freed due to the (correct) prophecy of Vespasian's accession (J. *BJ* 3.399ff.). He was a friend of Emperor Titus, Vespasian's son, and an "embedded historian" during the Jewish War and the siege of Jerusalem (AD 70). Josephus got Roman

citizenship from Vespasian, took a Romanized name, and later acquired lodgings in Vespasian's family house in Rome, as well as a pension and a house in Judaea to compensate for loss of property in Jerusalem (J. *Vit.* 422). The historian may well have believed that his cooperation with the imperial elite was in line with the dictates of divine will, but the *Jewish War* (*Bellum Judaicum*) was undoubtedly also in perfect step with the Flavian dynasty's agenda of cleaning up the Rome of previous emperors and of ridding the state of what was portrayed as a serious external threat – an agenda represented by the erection of the new Temple of Peace in Rome (J. *BJ* 7.158). Yet Josephus used the opportunity subtly, to advertise the virtues of Jewish culture to the Romans; in the parlance of postcolonial studies, the “subaltern” (subject) peoples are here able subtly to educate the “colonizers,” Rome, on aspects of Jewish superiority (Barclay 2005: 315–32).

The Flavian period flourished through many literary voices in Rome, putting Josephus among poets like Valerius Flaccus, Statius, and Martial, and prose authors such as Quintilian, Pliny the Elder, Tacitus, Dio Chysostom, and Plutarch (Edmondson, Mason, and Rives 2005: 12–13). Like Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, and others before him, he wrote his histories at a distance from his native community. Like Thucydides and Xenophon, he was an exiled former commander whose distance allowed him to see both sides. Yet Josephus evidences a pro-Roman bias and lacks the neutrality of Thucydides. He uses speeches effectively to convey human motives, as does Thucydides, but we miss the deeper analysis of power politics at work. The orations and the narrative are notably theocentric, a real change from earlier histories; at times they have God himself speak (e.g., to Adam, Cain, and Noah in *AJ* 1.46–51, 57, 100–3). Josephus' speeches are not as polished as those of Dionysius, but more like the competent efforts of Arrian or Dio Cassius (Jones 2005: 204).

His *Jewish War*, in seven books, appeared about AD 78–81. Book 1 covered prehistory beginning in 175 BC and the Maccabean Revolt to AD 66; the rest is a close, often eyewitness account of subsequent events. Josephus wrote a first version in his native Aramaic, “for non-Greek speakers in the interior” of Asia Minor; the Aramaic was then translated into Greek, with the aid of “associates” (J. *BJ* 1.3 and *Ap.* 1.50). This second edition was meant for educated Jews, elite Romans, and others in the Eastern empire. His Greek was imperfect (J. *AJ* 20.11) and so the associates may well have added intertextual and verbal allusions to other Greek and Latin historians (Grant 1970: 254; Thackeray 1927, 1: xiii–xix). For example, the shock in Jerusalem of the news of the fall of Jotapata recalls the reaction in Athens after the Sicilian disaster, implying the beginning of the end of a free state (J. *BJ* 3.432, cf. Th. 8.1). Josephus witnessed the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in AD 70 (Books 5–6), and in 71 the glittering Roman triumph with the captives and spoils paraded through Rome (J. *BJ* 7.123–7.162). He made notes on the

spot and questioned deserters from the Jewish camp (J. *Ap.* 1.47–8). And he may well have read the commentaries of Vespasian and Titus (Thackeray 1927, 1: xx–xxii).

As an eyewitness with the ear of the general, he resembles Polybius in vividness and firsthand reliability, qualities absent from most other Greek historians of the Roman era. Josephus' motivation for writing is that the war is "the greatest upheaval"; in this he consciously emulates Thucydides 1.1. He also argues that other accounts have shown extreme bias for Romans or against Jews (J. *BJ* 1.1–2). Jewish leaders rebelled, mistakenly thinking that other Near Eastern states would join them and that the Romans were overly occupied with Gauls and Germans. In Book 2, a lengthy speech by Agrippa II, great-grandson of Herod the Great, serves as a tragic warning against revolution and well illustrates Josephus' mixture of traditional views of power with theocentrism (J. *BJ* 2.345–401). Do not defy the Roman Empire (*hēgemonia*), Agrippa warns, listing the formerly great powers and peoples that are now Roman subjects, including Athens, Sparta, Macedon, Thrace, Gaul, Iberia, Carthage, Parthia, Egypt, and many Asian cities (J. *BJ* 2.357–87). You have no allies, Agrippa says, and "the only refuge left to you is an alliance with God"; yet this is not practicable without keeping the Sabbath, which will certainly make you prey to the Romans; help cannot come from God or men; therefore you should not resist the Romans. The people did not listen, and soon after Jewish insurgents captured Masada. Josephus had earlier said that "rule is possible for no one without God's will" (J. *BJ* 2.140).

At the siege of Jerusalem Titus delegates Josephus to address the Jews on the city wall, and the latter implores them to spare their fatherland and Temple by surrendering:

[it is noble to fight for freedom and] to scorn more lowly masters, but not ones to whom everything was subject ... Fortune passed over from elsewhere to [the Romans], and God who brings round imperial power [*archē*] to peoples has come to Italy. In fact there is a very strong law [*nomos*] marked out among both beasts and humans to yield to the more powerful and rule belongs to those who possess a supremacy of arms.

(J. *BJ* 5.365–7)

The "law" hearkens back directly to Thucydides' Athenian formulations (Th. 1.76 and 5.105). In the second of these passages, the Athenians warn the Melians not to resist, and especially caution against reliance on divine aid against pragmatic considerations. Josephus has appropriated Thucydides' formula but further explains it as the shifting of God's favor. In effect, the Jews assume the role of the Melians, who may be sympathetic to readers but whose folly lies in losing all for a principle. When this advice fails to move them, Josephus recalls at length the many episodes when Jews in the past have eventually overcome oppression in Egypt, in Babylon, by Antiochus, Pompey,

Herod, and Sossius (J. BJ 5.375–98). But now, in part due to the Jews' own impieties, "the Deity has fled from the holy places and stands with those against whom you war" (J. BJ 5.412). The corollary of this theory of divine supervision is that it also removes credit from the Romans for superior virtues – rather divine will makes them mightier for the time being (Mason 2005: 257).

The narrative of the siege of Masada is as gripping and vivid a spectacle as any ancient battle narrative, and it is made all the more so by modern excavations that underscore the veracity of the account (J. BJ 7.252–406). Josephus must have heard of the horrors directly from one of the few survivors, and he most effectively recounts a quasi-Platonic exhortation by the leader of the "freedom fighters," Eleazar, which convinces them to see death as something not to be feared but embraced as a release (J. BJ 7.341–88). How delicate an argument this was from the historian who himself avoided group suicide after the Roman siege of Jotapata! The reader is left to see the complexity of the different situations that call for different expedients in view of a divinely decreed lot.

Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* (*Antiquitates Judeae*), published about AD 93–4 ("in the thirteenth year of Domitian's reign," J. AJ 20.267), covered in twenty books the history of the Jews from Creation to the outbreak of revolts (AD 66), aiming mainly to acquaint Greek readers with Judaism and to characterize Jews as fortunate under God's law (J. AJ 1.14ff). *Jewish Antiquities* is partly modeled on the war narratives of Herodotus and others and partly resembles rather Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities*, the "antiquities" (*archaia*) being inspired by Thucydides' "archaeology" on culture and customs, which prefaces the Sicilian War narrative (Th. 6.1–5). The biblical books from Genesis to Esther are a source for the earliest periods. Books 1–10 treat everything from Creation to the Persian rule and exile (587 BC), and also rely on Jewish texts, including rabbinic homilies in texts from the Aggadah. Books 8–10 deal with the death of Ahab, the captivity of the Ten Tribes of Israel, and the conquest of Babylon and Assyria by the Persian king Cyrus. Books 11–20 treat the period from Alexander the Great to the outbreak of the Judean War, using both Jewish and non-Jewish sources such as Polybius, Nicolaus of Damascus, and Strabo. Book 11 and half of Book 12 extend from the return from exile in 538 BC to the early second century BC and the death of Judas Maccabaeus. Then the rest of Book 12 to Book 20 closely follows the first book and a half of the *Jewish War*. The primary audience for the *Jewish Antiquities* may have been Josephus' fellow Jews, and the work was to bolster his reputation against criticisms of his handling of Jotapata and his considerable gifts from the imperial regime. But the work is also, credibly, an attempt to inform non-Jews, especially in Rome, of the history of Josephus' people, along with giving positive lessons regarding their egalitarian culture against the increasingly tyrannical regime of Domitian

(Edmondson et al. 2005: 5–6).

The work begins with a discussion of the flaws of prior historians, namely their desire to win fame, flatter those in power, express partisan bias or speak without a sense of the utility of history (J. AJ 1.1–4). His own experience and expertise led him to undertake this grand history of Jewish culture, spurred on by a supporter and model scholar, Epaphroditus, whose exact identity is uncertain. The espoused main lesson of *Jewish Antiquities* is that “people who conform to the will of God and are not emboldened to transgress well-established laws do prosper in all things beyond belief and receive happiness as a reward from God”; those who fail to do this meet disaster (J. AJ 1.14–15). God is, then, the center of this narrative and the reader is encouraged to act in a way that “befits His power.” From the beginning of the Jewish line, leadership of the people was called *hēgemonia*, a term that is used elsewhere for the “empire” of Rome but essentially means “authority,” “rule,” or “political supremacy,” all exercised at times by the Jews themselves. For example, God tells Abraham that Isaac is destined to bequeath his *hēgemonia* to good and lawful offspring (J. AJ 1.234). Jacob is also informed by God that “his descendants will have a long period of *hēgemonia* and good repute” (J. AJ 2.175). An oracle is reported to the Egyptian king that one born to the Israelites, Moses, will lessen the *hēgemonia* of the Egyptians and increase the lot of the Jews (J. AJ 2.205, cf. 235). When the Red Sea parted for Moses and then destroyed the Egyptian forces, Josephus recalls the parallel of God favoring Alexander’s destruction of the Persian empire by parting the Pamphylian Sea (J. AJ 2.347–8), which suggests an interesting comparison of the two very different leaders. Samuel later reminds Saul explicitly that “while he [Saul] had dominion [*hēgemonia*] over the peoples, God had it over him and over all matters” (J. AJ 6.131). *Hēgemonia* is in turn attributed to David, Solomon, and successive leaders.

When the narration turns to the Julio-Claudians, Josephus has a clear interest in Roman transitions of power. Tiberius is shown in an extended story to select a successor by divination, choosing the first grandson who came to him one day, namely Gaius (Caligula), and in the process evidencing a greater divine power at work (J. AJ 18.211–23). After Caligula’s assassination comes a character sketch that explains how, despite his education, he was corrupted by his unbridled authority (J. AJ 19.210). At the appointment of Claudius, Roman soldiers urged the Senate to choose a monarch (*autokratora*) and not to ruin the empire (*hēgemonia*) through a government shared by many (*poluarchia*) (J. AJ 19.249). Claudius later protects the rights of the Jews in Alexandria and Syria in an edict, and in another edict he upholds the Jews’ rights in the rest of the empire to keep their ancestral laws and customs (J. AJ 19.280–91). Agrippa I works closely with Claudius in Palestine, being more friendly to local Greeks than Jews, but exhibiting a mild nature generally (J. AJ 19.292–359). Agrippa II, a friend of Josephus, was a more reliable

supporter of Jewish interests. The account ends in the twelfth year of Nero's reign and summarizes the history as "all that befell us in Egypt, in Syria, and in Palestine ... all that we endured at the hands of the Assyrians, Babylonians, harsh treatments from the Persians and Macedonians, and after them the Romans" (J. *AJ* 20.259–60). It is, then, not the story of a people building a great political empire, but of noteworthy Jewish people and their virtues, endurance, and leadership while the great powers around them imposed oppressive hegemony.

Appian

Appian lived from c. AD 90/5 to c. AD 120 in Alexandria, where he witnessed the Jewish uprising of AD 116/7, then, as an adult, in Rome until about AD 165, under Hadrian and Antoninus Pius (AD 117–61). In Rome Appian befriended Fronto, tutor to Antoninus' son, the future emperor Marcus Aurelius, and he also held the rank of procurator (Gowing 1992: 274–7). He flourished, then, in the "golden age" of the Antonines and probably wrote mainly from AD 145 to 165, a positive view of the principate being detectable in his text. Appian's position, like that of many historians discussed here, is that of an "outsider" who settled in Rome among the elite, but his "provincial" Alexandrian heritage (of which he is proud) and his experience as a legal advocate are what characterizes his narrative: he conveys the views of other outsiders in relation to Rome and presents his case in a logical and credible manner (Gowing 1992: 283–7). His work is especially important as a source on civil strife in the late republic, given the detail provided and the crucial value of the period. He contributed his own selection, organization, and condensation of material and offered his own succinct versions of speeches. He is also a convinced monarchist who tries to explain Roman institutions to his Greek audience. He has a special interest in finance, economy, and social issues. He touts Roman values of good counsel, endurance, patience, moderation, and general virtue.

Appian's *Roman History* (*Historia Romana* in the Latin title; the Greek title is *Rhōmaika*, *Things Roman*) is organized ethnographically in twenty-four books going to AD 117, a useful and original organization, but without a strong thematic focus or particularly deep insight (Mehl 2011: 162–5). Extant parts include the preface, Books 6–9 and 11–17, and assorted fragments. Completely lost are Books 10 and 18–24. Book 1 is about early Rome and the kings, after which the work is arranged by individual peoples, in the order in which Rome came to terms with them. Books 2–5 are, each, on Italians, Samnites, Celts, and Sicilians; Books 6–9 on Iberians, Hannibal, Carthaginians, and Macedonians and Illyrians. Book 10 is on Greeks and Ionians, then Books 11–12 on Syrians, Parthians, and Mithridates. Books 13–

17, commonly known as *Civil Wars* (*Bella civilia*) 1–5 (including in the Penguin and Loeb translations), are inserted here with a preface of their own. Books 18–21 are on the wars in Egypt; Book 22 covers the century up to Trajan; Book 23 recounts Trajan’s campaigns against Dacians, Jews, and Pontic people; and Book 24 discusses the Arabians.

The narrative of the first twelve books is the familiar discourse on the growth of global Roman hegemony; it includes the Punic Wars in extant Books 6–8, as Appian asserts: “Through prudence and good fortune Roman affairs have excelled in both size and duration, and in the acquisition of these things they have excelled all men in bravery [sc. excellence, *aretē*], patience, and hard work” (App. *Praef.* 11). Supreme virtues justify Roman rule (Bucher 2000: 430). Appian starts the preface with a simple but impressive “camera pan” over the sweep of the empire, from Britain to North Africa, to Egypt, to the Near East, to the Black Sea, to the Balkans, to Greece, and to Gaul, then to the major mountains, rivers, and islands (App. *Praef.* 1–5). Geography and ethnography are the deliberately impressive objects of imperial achievement; Rome is unparalleled by earlier empires in the catalogue (App. *Praef.* 8–10).

Here we focus on the dissonant period covered in *Civil Wars* (*Bellum civile*) 1–5. Appian clearly saw the Civil Wars as the crucial final struggle of the Romans: one against themselves, and one that offered them a prime justification for maintaining the imperial structure that Appian supported. If we count *Civil Wars* and Books 18–21 (on the aftermath in Egypt), nine of the twenty-four books cover the period of intense civil animosity from 133 to 30 BC. A close Greek account of this Roman period would show the peoples of the Eastern empire that the imperial structure is a solid one, born out of trial and error two centuries before. Appian aims to show “the Romans’ relations to each people, to understand the weakness or endurance of the conquered, the bravery and good fortune of the captors” (App. *Praef.* 12). Another lesson is the great cost of civil strife: “For all these gains were wasted under their successors since they waged civil war against one another, in which way alone great empires [*archai*] are dissolved” (App. *Praef.* 10). For the Civil War books, Appian designates each one by the names of the chief factional leaders – Marius versus Sulla (Book 1), Pompey versus Caesar (Book 2), Antony and Octavian against the assassins (Book 3), then against one another (Books 4–5) – and characterizes their content as events “that were of particularly greater anxiety to them [than were the external wars]” (*phoberōtera ... malista*, App. *Praef.* 14). Speeches are more sparingly used than in some historians – there are only twenty-two in the five books of the *Civil Wars*; yet fourteen of these occur between the assassination of Caesar and the battle of Philippi, enlivening that dramatic period (Carter 1996: xxviii–xxix).

Book 1 of *Civil Wars* begins with the tribunates of the two Gracchi (133–122 BC; App. *BC* 7–27); then comes an account of Saturninus (104–100 BC; App.

BC 1.28–33) before the core narrative of Sulla and Marius and its aftermath (88–33 BC; App. *BC* 1.55–115). Book 2 covering the period 63–44 BC reports the conspiracy of Catiline (App. *BC* 2.1–7), the First Triumvirate (App. *BC* 2.7–31), and the war of Caesar with Pompey (App. *BC* 2.32–87) through the African and Spanish Wars (App. *BC* 2.88–105). Caesar pardons the suppliant Athenians, allies of Pompey, after his defeat at Pharsalus, with a splendid put-down: “How often will the fame of your ancestors save you from your self-destruction?” (App. *BC* 2.88) The remark recalls both the histories of the fifth and fourth centuries and how civil strife laid low that great state. Book 2 ends with the murder of Caesar (App. *BC* 2.106–48) and a comparison of him with Alexander as a man of “fortune and power” (*tuchēn kai dunamin*; 2.149–54). In this odd digression we see the spirit, if not the inspiration, of the same comparison made by Appian’s contemporary Plutarch. The passage also recalls the connection of Appian’s city, Alexandria, with Egypt at the closure of the *Civil Wars* and with its being an empire second only to Rome (App. *BC* 1.6; Bucher 2000: 439–40). Book 3 shows the complex lead-up to the Second Triumvirate, which joined Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus and is the central story of Book 4 – a book replete with the horrors of “proscriptions” (land confiscations and executions) of citizens (see especially chapters 5–51) and climaxing in the “showdown” of Brutus and Cassius against Octavian and Antony at Philippi (App. *BC* 4.86–106). The closing chapters sum up the tragic virtues of Brutus and Cassius and note certain divine signs that foreshadowed and endorsed their downfall (App. *BC* 4.132–34). The driving narrative of Book 5 is that of Octavian facing off with Antony, a siege at Perusia (App. *BC* 5.30–49; 40 BC), the reconciliation of the foes at Brundisium (App. *BC* 5.50–66) and Octavian’s proclamation of an end to the civil war (App. *BC* 5.127–35).

Appian’s project recalls that of Polybius, being intended to chronicle the growth of swiftly nascent Roman rule. It also evokes the universal scope of Diodorus Siculus and of Nicolaus of Damascus. But it is Appian’s second-century AD perspective that sets his narrative apart. His use of sources is disputed, since not many are mentioned, but Sallust was definitely used for Catiline’s conspiracy and probably the writings of Asinius Pollio, Caesar, and Augustus elsewhere – possibly the memoirs of Sulla, too. Among Greek authors, he surely read Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, and Hieronymus of Cardia (who wrote on events of 323–272 BC). But Appian’s mixture of selections yields a hybrid narrative that is reasonably reliable, matter of fact, and clearly reflective of his individual views.

Appian was not as apologetic as others had been in the late republic in defending Rome as a worthy empire, since now it was firmly established as one. Nor was he as critical of emperors as the Latin historian Tacitus (c. AD 56–117): “Appian takes Tacitus’ program and inverts it, discrediting the republic by presenting evidence of its inability to maintain public order and

indeed even to provide for its own continuing operation” (Bucher 2000: 450). Appian presents the ambiguities of the empire alongside those of the more democratic republican constitution, and in the end accepts the present structure as a viable, natural evolution to “concord and monarchical power” (BC 1.6; Bucher 2000: 431). The Roman republic’s historical problem was, the sub-preface to the *Civil Wars* suggests, the struggle for personal power (*dunasteia*) evidenced in Sulla, Pompey, Caesar, and the triumvirs and arising out of the prior anarchy (App. BC 1.1–5). Before Sulla, “a chaotic wanton violence [*hubris akosmos*] continued constantly, as did a disdain for laws and justice” (App. BC 1.2); the resonance with Thucydides on *stasis* is unmistakable (App. BC 3.82–3). Octavian forged a foundation for the empire, but even his description is nuanced:

the first to be regarded as “august” ... no longer needing election or any form of authorization or pretense. As his rule [*archē*] was long-lasting and firmly empowered, and he was fortunate in all things and feared, he left a lineage and succession that managed power similarly to him.

(App. BC 1.5)

In contrast, “democracy” (as the shared power of the republic is glossed) may seem noble but is inferior: the staunch loyalty of Brutus’ and Cassius’ followers after Philippi was “not for personal reasons, but for democracy, a specious name, and something always unproductive” (App. BC 4.133; Carter 1996: xxx–xxxi). Scholars have regarded Appian’s balanced picture of individuals in the *Civil Wars* as evidence of objectivity, or else of “distance from events and his interest in the broader, teleological movement of history [that] gives him no reason to create heroes or monsters” (Bucher 2000: 442).

The ethnographic, comparative books (mostly lost) reminded Greek readers around the Mediterranean of their place in history; but Greeks are now paraded not as rivals for greatness, but as current members in the unified enterprise of the Roman empire. Appian prizes the Roman virtues of excellence and hard work, but also puts a premium on good counsel as a crucial skill, well known to this former lawyer. He does not showcase romantic tales of adventure or sparkling descriptions of places or people, but his account itself exemplifies level-headed analysis. Appian also emphasizes the role of some cosmic “fate,” which is similar to that force in Polybius that guides Roman destiny. But here it often directs individual decisions, being reminiscent of the role of fate in Greek tragedy and in Herodotus. Omens are cited before the death of Caesar (App. BC 2.116); a spirit (*daimonion*) warns Brutus of his demise just before Philippi (App. BC 4.134); fate sweeps Pompey and his army “foolishly” to their defeat at Pharsalus, since “the god organized these matters at the beginning of the present empire [*hēgemonia*], which embraces everything” (App. BC 2.71–2); and the triumviral proscriptions are boldly interpreted as a tool of divine direction: “the divinity

shook the most powerful hegemony of all peoples on land and sea, intending at length for it to arrive at its present good order” (App. *BC* 4.16.61; see Bucher 2000: 431–33; Carter 1996: xxii–xxiv). Appian does not imply that the ills of civil strife are a means to an end justifiable to the human participants, but, by invoking some almost Herodotean cosmic causation, he reinscribes human failings as part of a benevolent divine plan.

Arrian

Five hundred years after Alexander’s conquests and his coeval historians, we find a pronounced revival of interest in that great commander evidenced by the work of the wealthy Greek philosopher and pro-Roman politician Arrian (c. AD 86–175/6). We can only guess why the narrative reappears in the high empire at such length and with such a successful reception. Diodorus Siculus’ history devoted two books to Alexander and his father Philip (D.S. 16–17). We noted above how Appian’s digression and Plutarch’s *Lives* had just recently compared Julius Caesar with Alexander as quintessential, successful expansionists – a parallel to which Arrian tactfully does not allude. And we observed the “biographic turn” in imperial historians, though Arrian’s work was not strictly a biography but the account of Alexander’s “expedition up country,” his *anabasis*. In Latin the historian Quintus Curtius Rufus, writing in the late first or early second century AD, composed a highly moralizing and rhetorical – but not well documented – ten-book *History of Alexander* (Books 3–10 survive). The legacy of Alexander was a magnet for literary and artistic appropriation in antiquity, notably in an *Alexander Romance* by an author known to us as Pseudo-Callisthenes, written in the last centuries BC and first century AD in Alexandria. Did Arrian seek to tame the exaggeration by reworking the accounts of his main sources, Ptolemy and Aristobulus (see [Chapter 6](#) above)? Was his work undertaken simply out of personal zeal, or was there a political agenda behind it, perhaps a commentary on monarchy and empire? These motives are equally plausible, but they must remain hypotheses.

Lucius Flavius Arrianus was born into a Greek family in Nicomedia in Bithynia (modern Northwestern Turkey). He was a student of the Stoic Epictetus at Nicopolis (Western Central Greece) and later published his teacher’s lectures in eight books. He served a highly visible career in state offices, beginning as an advisor to the governor of the province of Greece (Achaëa), and traveled to many Roman provinces. Through the Greek governor he befriended Hadrian in Greece in AD 108–12 and was given by that emperor the right to speak in the Senate. He became a suffect consul (a fast-track promotion) in AD 129 or 130, and then legate to Cappadocia (the wilds of Eastern Anatolia) in AD 131–7, with marked success as general

against a local tribe, the Alani. When Hadrian died in AD 138 and Antoninus Pius became emperor, Arrian quietly retired to Athens and held a (largely honorary) archonship in AD 145/6, then he became a member of the Areopagus for life (Atkinson 2013: xiv–xvi; Bosworth 1988: 16–37).

Arrian's works include an *Anabasis of Alexander* (covering 336–323 BC in seven books); *Indica* (one book); *Events after Alexander* (323–19 BC; ten books); *Bithyniaca* (eight books); *Parthica* (Rome's wars with Parthia from Crassus to Trajan, in seventeen books; Appian may have served there under Trajan); *Discourses of Epictetus* (eight books); *On Hunting with Hounds*; *Voyage around the Black Sea*; *Essay on Tactics*; and *Order of Battle against the Alani*. He avowed a spiritual kinship with the erstwhile general, philosopher, historian, and prolific writer Xenophon, and he stylistically fused elements of Herodotus and Thucydides with elements of Xenophon.

Arrian's most famous work is the *Anabasis*, which deals in seven books with Alexander's accession and conquests until his death. Related to it are *Events after Alexander* and the *Indica*, the latter a digest of Indian memorabilia based on Megasthenes, Eratosthenes, and Nearchus, recounting Nearchus' mission to take the fleet from the Indus to the mouth of the Tigris and to Susa in 325 BC. The *Anabasis*, our focus here, is thought to have been written in AD 140, but Bosworth persuasively argues for a composition date before AD 125 (Bosworth 1980, 1: 11). If we accept the earlier date, the work was written in the context of Hadrian's very pro-Hellenic regime. The work achieves a biographical balance of eulogy and criticism, selectively interlaced with colorful stories from late rhetorical sources. Arrian's emphasis is on a dense and brief style at the expense of strict historical accuracy, and he keeps a constant eye on individual ethical responsibility. His criticism of sources is sharp and appropriate, and most of his views on Alexander are balanced (Baynham 2010: 325–32).

The preface of the *Anabasis* (Arr. *An. Praef.* 1–3) justifies the topic simply by discussing the variety of written accounts, which his own one uses selectively and surpasses in synthesis. There is no research travel, nor mention of the utility of the project, though he soon justifies the purpose of recording the deeds of the greatest historical figure (Arr. *An.* 1.12). Only at the end does he make clear that criticism is combined with praise “for the sake of my sense of truth and the utility of the work for people. It is for this that I set to write, and like Alexander I did it not without the god's help” (Arr. *An.* 7.30). This history is quasi-biographical: not about a war, but about a man (Stadter 1980: 63–4). The *Anabasis* is an unapologetic, critical amalgam of others' research, like much modern historical writing.

The narrative structure is essentially a series of marches followed by Alexander's interactions with the peoples at each juncture, whether in describing a battle, a siege, a surrender, or notes on local administration (Stadter 1980: 76–88); and this mirrors Xenophon's practice in the *Anabasis*.

After the preface, Arrian mentions little of the fabulous backstory of Alexander's youth and goes right to his accession and his early expeditions to Athens and Thebes designed to solidify Macedonian power there and to destroy Thebes along the way for resisting (Arr. *An.* 1.1–10). Alexander then undertook the plan of his father Philip II to mount an expedition against Persia in revenge for the Persian Wars, appropriating images of the Trojan War, then winning a battle at the Granicus River with heroic daring, receiving Sardis, the Lydian capital, overcoming Miletus, and capturing Halicarnassus (Arr. *An.* 1.12–23). Alexander crosses to Asia at Sestos (Arr. *An.* 1.11) and sacrifices at the grave there of Protesilaus, the first Greek ashore in the Trojan War (Hom. *Il.* 2.107); this is also the spot where Herodotus, at the end of his work, recounts the story of that Protesilaus' tomb and the gruesome crucifixion there that marked the end of the Persian Wars (Hdt. 9.116–21). Alexander's outset seems inauspicious. Alexander and his partner Hephaestion then give offerings at the tombs of Achilles and Patroclus (Arr. *An.* 1.12), which again suggests Homeric identification. That association is reawakened in Book 7, at Hephaestion's death and funeral games, which are like those that Achilles had for Patroclus (Arr. *An.* 7.14; cf. *Il.* 23; Stadter 1980: 74–5). If Alexander is Achilles, Arrian is arguably his Homer. Book 2 covers the expedition to Gordium and the cutting of the famous knot there in order to confirm the prediction that whoever is to do so would "rule Asia." Next Alexander crosses the Halys River in Cappadocia – a kind of "Rubicon" into Persian territory – and goes south to the Anatolian coast, then inland a bit to meet the Persian king Darius III at the famous battle of Issus in 333 BC, where he delivers to the Persians a crucial defeat (Arr. *An.* 2.1–14). Arrian reserves special praise for Alexander's kind treatment of Darius' mother, wife, and children after this victory (Arr. *An.* 2.12). After Issus, Alexander writes to Darius that he is now "Lord of all Asia" and of Darius (Arr. *An.* 2.14). The ingenious, improvised sieges of Tyre and Gaza and the invasion of Egypt are described at 2.16–3.2. Alexander plans the foundation of Alexandria and consults the oracle of Ammon at Siwah in the desert. The final defeat of Darius' forces comes when Alexander moves eastward again, fighting the epic clash at Gaugamela (Arr. *An.* 3.7–15); the general immediately takes the key cities of Babylon, the administrative capital, Susa, and Persepolis, the royal capital (Arr. *An.* 3.16–18). Arrian criticizes Alexander for the torching of Persepolis (Arr. *An.* 3.18.12). Darius dies at the hands of his officers and his body is sent by Alexander for burial at Persepolis (Arr. *An.* 3.19–22). New threats from Bessus, self-proclaimed "king of Asia," and his supporter Satibarzanes (a former Greek ally) lead Alexander to Bactria (now Northern Afghanistan). He fights tenacious insurgency in the hills there and in Scythian territory without much success (Arr. *An.* 3.23–4.6). The first three books thus evoke numerous themes to which imperial Romans were attuned, for example the luster of a heroic general appropriating images from the legendary past (Alexander is another Homeric hero, and Roman-era leaders can be both Alexander-like and

Homeric); the justification of imperial conquest as a way to right historical wrongs or to silence imagined threats (selectively chosen and properly “spun”); the glorification of epic-like battles; the need to march in step with divine oracular advice; and the pervasive theme of the civilized rightly conquering barbarian foes.

While Books 1–3 cover six years (336–330 BC), Books 5–7 probe more intensely into three and a half (326–323 BC). Book 4, with an exceptional three-year scope (329–327 BC), narrates the encounters with the tribal lords of the Sogdian, Bactrian, and Indian mountains, and Book 5 the march from the Punjab to Hyphasis, after which follows the return to Persepolis in Book 6 and Alexander’s last year in Susa, Opis, Ecbatana, and Babylon in Book 7. In Book 4 comes a “great digression” (Bosworth’s term) showing the degenerating behavior of Alexander, which resembles that of an Eastern despot: the brutal punishment of Bessus (Arr. *An.* 4.7), the Greek commander’s Persian dress and his requirement that others bow before him (*proskunēsis*) – all of which provokes dissention between young and veteran soldiers and disagreement over Macedonian policies (Arr. *An.* 4.7–14; Stadter 1980: 105–14). The climax of the digression comes with the tragic killing of Cleitus, a cavalry commander who insults the king – and he, in turn, angry and very drunk, kills Cleitus, but with much regret later (Arr. *An.* 4.8–9). Alexander can master the world but, ironically, not himself. The point of this section to Arrian’s audience may be either to show how Hadrian surpasses Alexander in restraint or – in view of the imperial excesses of Caligula, Nero, and Domitian more generally – to warn those in power not to lose their “European” identity and “go Asian”: a critique as old as that of Herodotus. After this seeming turning point, Arrian’s criticism outweighs his praise of Alexander. Yet glimmers of the latter’s better side come through at times: Alexander “does not violate” the captive Rhoanē (Roxanne), the daughter of a local nobleman Oxyartes, but marries her (Arr. *An.* 4.19), and this recalls the anecdote mentioned above that after the battle of Issus Alexander becomes “a model of nobility and restraint” in his treatment of Darius’ family (2.12). When hearing of Alexander’s kind treatment, Darius prays to Zeus: if it is not Zeus’ will to keep him as king of Asia, “give my power [*kratos*] to none but Alexander” (Arr. *An.* 4.20). The crossing into India – which is marked by the crossing of the Indus River (Arr. *An.* 5.1–8) – and the events of Books 5 and 6 mark an *anabasis* within the *Anabasis*, a superfluous expedition of conquest of all Asia and Africa (Arr. *An.* 4.7), far beyond the original goal of avenging the Persian Wars. Hence these books represent Alexander’s imperialist *hubris* and also offer an exposition of Herodotean-like foreign “wonders.” Some say that Alexander’s “longing” (*pothos*, a favorite Arrian word) was the crucial motive for his conquests, an intellectual curiosity linked also to type-A ambition and to sexual desire (Stoneman 2010: 338–9).

Arrian returns at the end of Book 7 to a justification of his topic, a need to

balance his mistakes with the wondrous achievements of his career (Arr. *An.* 7.29–30; see Stadter 1980: 73–4, 113–14). In this overview, Arrian, like Posidonius and Diodorus before him, follows closely his Stoic beliefs by implying that all events are controlled by an external providence, and yet individuals are responsible for their own actions. So the historian doubts Alexander’s claim of divine birth (Cartledge 2010: xxii–xxiii), though he says: “he does not seem to me to have been born without some divine agency [*to theion*], one unlike any other human” (Arr. *An.* 7.30). The narrative often refers to oracles that Alexander consults, apparently in line with a cosmic direction to events. Earlier, at the Tigris and en route to Babylon, Alexander had met Chaldean seers whose advice is belittled and who seemed not to help him, at which Arrian comments: “but the truth is that the divine power [*to daimonion*] led him to the place where he had to die once he reached it” (Arr. *An.* 7.16). The historian then recalls the Herodotean tale of Solon advising Croesus not to call a man happy before his death, and mentions here the Patroclus–Hephaestion comparison. Arrian thus puts Alexander into the company of historical expansionist monarchs and Homeric heroes whose fates definitely followed a greater cosmic, and tragic, design.

In Arrian’s *Anabasis* generally there are significant allusions to the contemporary world of Hadrian. Arrian reports the possible embassy from the Romans to Alexander once he was crowned as “king of Asia,” saying: “he could see in these men a discipline, a conscientiousness, and a freedom of spirit, which, together with their answers to his questions about their political system, led him to predict something of the future power of Rome” (Arr. *An.* 7.15, Hammond, 2013: 211; Bosworth 2007: 448). On the other hand, Arrian’s Alexander himself becomes more tyrant-like in character, quickly prone to anger: “By that time he had become rather quick tempered and from the foreign obsequiousness he was no longer reasonable with the Macedonians” (Arr. *An.* 7.8; cf. 7.4). Readers are meant to contrast this tyrant type with the more balanced monarch, Hadrian (Bosworth 2007: 448). Arrian can also critique his protagonist through allusion: Alexander at a crucial battle in India (Arr. *An.* 6.9) is implicitly compared with Hector in his final speech before his death, “May I not die without glory” (*Il.* 22.304–5), though Alexander is shown as too rash and glory-centered. Nor does Arrian portray positively Alexander’s search for a limitless empire, and this was in sympathy with Hadrian’s policy of keeping to one’s borders (Bosworth 2007: 451–2):

I can affirm one thing about his plan [had he lived longer], that it would not be something small and insignificant, nor would he stop with the possessions he had, but still seek the unknown, even if he did not struggle against another, he would against himself.

(Arr. *An.* 7.1)

In this context Arrian quotes the gurus of Taxila (Northern India), telling the

king:

King Alexander, each human can occupy only so much earth as that on which he stands. You are a human like the rest of us, except that since you are ambitious and reckless, you march over so much of the earth away from your own, making trouble for yourself and causing it for others. And then even soon when you die you will occupy only so much land as covers your corpse.

(Arr. *An.* 7.1)

This anecdote is immediately followed by the one about Alexander meeting the sunbathing Diogenes the Cynic in Athens, who is unimpressed and asks only that the ruler move out of his sun (Arr. *An.* 7.2). These digressions at the beginning of Book 7 all serve to undercut Alexander's oversized ambitions, reminiscent of those of the Herodotean Xerxes. Alexander has become the man he sought to take vengeance on. The characterization has clear lessons for Roman leaders.

Dio Cassius

After Arrian and Appian, who flourished in the Antonine period (AD 138 to the 170s), the next major extant Greek historian is one who wrote under the Severan dynasty (Septimius Severus to Severus Alexander, AD 193–235). Dio Cassius (c. AD 163–after 229) from Nicaea in Bithynia (modern Iznik, Turkey) wrote a *Roman History* from the origins to AD 229, in eighty books. He came from a distinguished family (his father was an imperial official), arrived in Rome about AD 180, and swiftly entered the inner circles. He was made senator in AD 192 under Commodus, praetor in AD 194 under Pertinax, and suffect consul twice (last in AD 229) under Septimius Severus. From AD 218 until 228 he was curator of Smyrna and Pergamum, proconsul of Africa, and legate of Dalmatia and then of Upper Pannonia; he retired to Bithynia. During his career he endured a series of inferior and sometimes tyrannical emperors, which is reflected in the views of his work.

His *Roman History* (*Historia Romana*) was researched and written sometime between 194 and 223 and contained eighty books, of which only Books 36.1.1 to 60.28.3, covering the period 69 BC to AD 46, are extant – but with gaps after 6 BC. Large parts of Books 78–80 (death of Caracalla to Elagabalus) are also extant. The twelfth-century Byzantine scholar Zonaras has epitomized the books that go down to 146 BC and those that cover the period 44 BC to AD 96; and the eleventh-century monk Xiphilinus has epitomized all the material from 69 BC to the end. Organized in groups of ten, Books 1–40 cover the

time from Aeneas to Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon; Books 41–50 narrate the Civil War; and Books 51–60 encompass events from Octavian's victory at Actium and the start of empire to the death of Claudius. Book 80 ends with Dio's retirement from his second consulship and from political life. Dio is flexible in his narrative framework, which has many brief digressions; introductions and conclusions frame emperors' reigns. Sources for the treatment of periods before Dio's own include annals for the earliest periods, Polybius for the Second Punic War, and Livy for material in Book 36 and onward. Dio does not use Tacitus for Tiberius. He makes numerous errors and omissions, but he also evinces much independence of interpretation and capacity to shape his material. His accounts of the regimes witnessed firsthand – those of Septimius and Caracalla – are particularly valuable.

Dio's speeches are freer inventions than those usually found among the historians, often long, generally endowed with a dramatic function, and often heavily ironic (Millar 1964: 78–83). The work is in Attic Greek, with mixed Greek and Roman elements of style and with frequent verbal borrowings, especially from Thucydides. Like Thucydides, Dio is alert to discrepancies between appearance and reality, which are made critical and cynical by political experience. If Appian, living under the Antonines, focused on the unity that the empire afforded, Dio much more darkly sought the complex and difficult style of Thucydides, which was meant to challenge Severan-period readers and make them analyze things for themselves. Most significantly, Dio is the first Greek historian after Thucydides to take up that author's pessimistic view of a “human nature” rooted in acquisitiveness, aggression, and fear (e.g., Th. 3.82; 5.105; see Reinhold 1988: 215–16; Millar 1964: 76; Hose 2007: 466–7). Dio cites “human nature” more often than any other Greek historian, and has fifteen different phrases for it (Reinhold 1988: 216). Many of these reflect the Thucydidean core views. For example, in the paired speeches by Agrippa and Maecenas offering advice to Octavian about whether or not to lay down the principate in 29 BC, Agrippa argues for laying aside the monarchy, even though “people believe that it is a part of human nature to dare some violent act, even if it seems greedy” (D.C. 52.2), and Maecenas claims that it is not unseemly for Octavian to remain as monarch: “a yearning [*epithumēma*] [sc. to rule] is not alien to human nature and the risk is a noble one” (D.C. 52.18); and yet, since “the nature often leads many to transgress the law,” the ruler should “humanely [*anthrōpinōs*] mix kindness with legal strictures” (D.C. 52.34; compare Diodotus in the Mytilenean debate, Th. 2.45–8). Plotting against one in power is also part of human nature (D.C. 55.14), Livia consoles Augustus – and she also urges clemency in view of the human tendency to do wrong (D.C. 55.16 and 21).

Dio in fact tells the story of how he came to write history after he had published a book about the dreams and portents that made Severus hope for “imperial power” (*autokratora archēn*) and then he himself had a dream in

which “a divinity [*daimonion*] commanded me to write history ... I then longed to compile a record of everything else that concerned the Romans” (73[72].23). Dio then says that he considers Fortune (Tyche) to be his guide in the task – the one sending him dreams, inspiring him – and that he spent ten years collecting materials and twelve years writing. The supernatural plays a crucial role generally in his *Roman History*, where divine intervention is seen as directing human affairs and much space is given to portents. In this Dio deviates significantly from Thucydides.

Even if Dio is critical of monarchy at times, he looks favorably upon the major transition from republic to monarchy, as only monarchy promised stability. He points out that the reports of events to the Senate and the people become rarer after the establishment of the empire; after that time

most things were kept silent and concealed, and even if they are made public, they are distrusted since they are not verifiable. For everything said and done is suspected to be the plans of those continually in power and their associates. (D.C. 53.19)

Dio then declares that his narrative is at the mercy of these dubious public sources, but he promises, in a sad echo of Thucydides’ method (Th. 1.22), to make the best judgment he can on the basis of what is available (Hose 2007: 465). Oddly, this mistrust of sources is mentioned in relation to Augustus’ period, but skeptical concerns are not reiterated for the events of Dio’s own time (Millar 1964: 172–3). Perhaps Dio is more confident about his instinct for the truth in an era when he could question witnesses personally.

Even in the case of emperors whom Dio knew directly, he did not hesitate to display their tyrannical folly to the extent that he apologized for its inclusion, lest he be thought a sensationalist (D.C. 73[72].18; Marincola 1997: 91–2) – for instance Commodus’ gladiatorial ventures in the arena (D.C. 73[72].21) and Caracalla’s maniacal imitation of Alexander the Great (D.C. 78[77].7–8; Millar 1964: 132–3 and 151). One primary document of critical interest is Dio’s eyewitness report of Septimius Severus’ speech to the Senate upon his accession (by force, in AD 197), in which he praises the severity of Sulla, Marius, and Augustus and censures the mildness of Pompey and Caesar (D.C. 76[75].7–8; Hose 2007: 461–2). Dio’s view is generally senator-centric in that he sees how emperors measured up to senators’ expectations. Again, in the paired speeches of Agrippa and Maecenas that counsel Octavian on the monarchy, the debate occupies almost all of Book 52 (about 33 pages of English translation). This is a detailed constitutional analysis airing points in much greater detail than the constitutional debate among Persians in Herodotus’ Book 3 (Millar 1964: 102–18). It is also strongly reminiscent of the paired speeches in Thucydides. The conversation of course relates to Dio’s period and to the empire generally, perhaps not aiming for radical change but aiming to keep core issues of democracy versus monarchy in active consideration.

Dio's Severan period presented a real difference from Appian's Antonine era, more emperors coming from the Eastern empire after Elagabalus and ever more senators coming also from the east. So Dio's history is meant to instruct this new contingent, to focus on the emperor, and to discuss senatorial concerns at greater length than Appian's had done (Gowing 1992: 292–4).

Herodian

Herodian (c. AD 170–240), perhaps from Antioch, was a slightly older contemporary of Dio. He was an imperial freedman who had “imperial and public service” of some sort, possibly as a procurator, an imperial administrator (Hdn. 1.2; Matthews 2007: 295; Whittaker 1969: xix–xxviii). It has been suggested that his lack of attention to greater political issues and his concern with court intrigue and fiscal matters indicate freedman origins, though this view assumes a class stereotype (Whittaker 1969: xxi–xxii). Herodian is the author of *A History of the Empire after Marcus* in eight books covering the period from the death of Marcus Aurelius to the accession of Gordian III (AD 180–238). Where there is overlap with Dio's history, the evidence demonstrates that Herodian was using the work of his predecessor (Whittaker 1969: lxxv–lxxvii). The entire period of Herodian's *History* is synchronous with his own lifetime, as he wrote “events that I myself know/saw [*oida*]” (Hdn. 1.1 and 2.15). He writes of Severus, he says, “omitting noting worthy of account or memory” (Hdn. 2.15). Yet his writing is short on details of names and places and seems to lack the authority one might find if he had held a higher position. The eighteenth-century scholar F. A. Wolf said that Herodian seems to have been a man “neither bold in judgment nor able in ingenuity” (*nec iudicio promptus nec acumine pollens*: quoted in Whittaker 1969: xxxviii). Yet the *History* has value as a supplement to sections of Dio's. His lengthy description of the siege of Aquileia by the forces of Emperor Maximinus is well done, with good reports of the economy and topography (Hdn. 8.2–6), including the story of the emperor's death and the celebration of victory. The audience may consist mostly of non-Roman Greek speakers, since Herodian often glosses Roman practices and institutions; but he aims also to impress the Roman elite with a novel and entertaining narrative (Whittaker 1969: xxviii–xxxi). For Herodian as for Polybius and others, the pleasant and the useful can be combined (Hdn. 1.1).

The preface (Hdn. 1.1) is strongly reminiscent of Thucydides' prefatory chapters (Th. 1.1–24) in several aspects, including its wording. Common themes are the claim to adhere to truth over style; the value accorded to long-term use against temporary fame; bias coming out of hostility or hatred

toward tyrants or a desire for imperial or individual favor; the striving for accuracy and fact checking; and the mentioning of the occurrence of earthquakes and plagues. Yet the fad of a simpler, Atticist style at this time and the reception of Thucydides over the generations do not point to as strong a Thucydidean intertextuality in Herodian as was seen in Dio. One stylistic legacy is the generous use of speeches, thirty-three in all in the *History*, most of them in the first four books, perhaps to establish major themes there. For instance, the transition of authority is conveyed through speeches by Marcus on his deathbed (“rulers inspire their subjects’ minds not by fear of cruelty but by a yearning for goodness”) and by Commodus to his soldiers and advisors upon accession (“We must concern ourselves with human affairs and rule of the world”) (Hdn. 1.4–5). Pithy dialogue for dramatic effect is more frequent than the lengthy speeches exposing deeper values, such as Pertinax’s speech to the Senate after being proclaimed emperor by the Praetorian Guard: “Freedom does not bring cheer to the extent that slavery causes grief ... You must join me in the joint administration of rule [*archē*] as we undertake an aristocracy, and do not endure tyranny” (Hdn. 2.3). Note also the lengthy speech of Severus to his army to denounce the depravity of his rival Albinus (Hdn. 3.6).

Herodian’s narrative naturally centers on the successive emperors, while Marcus Aurelius stands as a paragon of monarchy against whom later figures are measured, namely an ideal man devoted to education, kind to subjects, mild in judgment, personally disciplined, militarily adept, and politically respected by the Senate, as opposed to the cruel and violent tyrant (Hdn. 1.1–4; 2.4; Whittaker 1969: lxxi–lxxxii). Commodus (AD 180–92) rules by fear and lives by self-indulgence (Hdn. 1.6–17). Book 2 chronicles the Year of Five Emperors – AD 193. Septimius Severus (AD 193–211) is a mixed figure, diligent, brave, and shrewd but also self-centered, greedy, and terrifying (Hdn. 3.6–9). For instance, he succeeds Pertinax by pretending to the soldiers “that he was not aiming at empire [*archē*] or striving after power for himself so much as wanting to avenge the murder of so great a king” (Hdn. 2.9). Geta is kind, mild, good, and humane (Hdn. 4.3), in contrast to the tyrannical Caracalla (AD 211–17) (Hdn. 4.3–7). Macrinus fails to live up to the standards of Marcus (claiming “mildness,” Hdn. 5.1), and Elagabalus (AD 218–22) is an Eastern potentate (Hdn. 5.5). Severus Alexander allows a return to aristocratic values and political virtue, military affairs being his weakness (Hdn. 6.1–9). Herodian echoes Thucydides 1.1 when he has Alexander see the Persian threat as “the greatest upheaval” of the Roman empire (Hdn. 6.3). A chaotic period of five emperors, marked by the breakdown of concord with the Senate after Severus and up to Gordian III, occupies the rest of the narrative; then there is the reign of Maximinus the Thracian in Book 7 and the Year of the Six Emperors (AD 238) in Book 8.

Late Ancient Legacy

Of course the choice of Herodian (about AD 250) as an endpoint of this overview, just before late antiquity (again, a period with debatable borders), is somewhat arbitrary. Late antiquity is generally considered to begin with the split into an Eastern and a Western empire under Diocletian (r. 286–305), at the end of the crisis of the third century (c. 235–84). We mention very briefly some of the successors to the tradition. A rare Athenian in the empire was P. Herennius Dexippus, who wrote during the reign of Aurelian (270–5) a *Chronicle* (nonextant) running from prehistory to AD 269/70 and modeled on Thucydidean style. Eunapius of Sardis (c. 345–429) took up Dexippus' account with a history (also lost) of the years 270–404. The extant ten-book *Ecclesiastical History* of the prolific biblical scholar Eusebius of Caesarea (c. AD 260–340) offers the most important contemporary source on Constantine I and a view that God's plans direct all history. We also have the *New History* of Zosimus in six books, written at the end of the fifth century; it briefly surveys the emperors to Diocletian and presents the events of AD 270–410 in greater detail (Lesky 1966: 851–3). Some consider Procopius (c. AD 500–c. 565), with his *The Wars of Justinian* in eight books (all preserved) and his *Secret History* (also preserved), to be the last major historian of the ancient world (Cameron 1985). The sixth-century Ioannes Malalas, author of an extant Christian *Chronography* in eighteen books that covers history from Adam to Justinian, and the seventh-century John of Antioch, writer of a *Historical Chronography* that goes from Adam to Emperor Phikas (AD 610) and is modeled on Malalas, are major heirs to the universal histories of Ephorus and Diodorus.

Conclusions

Among the historians surveyed in this chapter we can appreciate the rich variety of approaches and topics in play at the height of the Roman power. We note three trends: Rome-centered narratives, outsider perspectives, and prolific productivity. First, despite the wealth of potential subject matter from the history of the Greeks and other peoples, the great majority of Greek histories of the period were, not surprisingly, intensely Rome-centered. Josephus' writing on the Jews and Appian's survey of other ethnic groups still measure everything against Rome. We have seen that Arrian's Alexander narrative, which seems the exception, offers much of relevance to the empire. Rome from its origins to the near present was the topic of Diodorus, Dionysius, Appian, and Dio Cassius, each seeking to explain and justify to the Greeks and others the remarkable rise and acme of the Roman state. But each

of these accounts also contained cautions about virtues and challenges to the rulers and to citizens generally.

Second, these historians allow us to see the spectrum of the opinions of “the other people” under the empire, even if the views are muted by some self-censorship. Notably the “others” may have Greek language and culture in common, but their native roots are in several different regions. Almost by definition, Greek historians had to come from among non-native Romans, the exception being Fabius Pictor. Even so, it is noteworthy that no major Greek historians of the era are natives of mainland Greece or the Aegean islands; they come instead from Sicily or Southern Italy, from the Eastern Mediterranean or Egypt, which were more intellectually vibrant (and wealthy) at this time. All came from affluent families that could afford the leisure of education, but most of them also had some pragmatic experience in politics, and some of them in military matters. All had spent some time in Rome and had contact with, or at least firsthand observation of, emperors or major leaders of the day: Diodorus of Pompey and Caesar, Nicolaus and Dionysius of Augustus, Josephus of Vespasian and Trajan, Appian of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, Arrian of Hadrian and Trajan, and Dio of Commodus, Pertinax, and Septimius Severus. Though technically outsiders, they won favor through their talent and probably their ability to present Rome to the Greek world in a light that served the Roman elite. And yet these historians all managed to have intellectually honest and independent agendas in their works, which presented models of virtue and vice for the ruling elite of their day.

Finally, the sheer quantity of extant Greek historical texts written in the three centuries from Diodorus to the mid-third century AD far outnumbers those written in the roughly three centuries from Herodotus to Polybius. This is due in part to the axiomatic principle that history is written by the victors – or, in this case, the subordinates of the victors who offer different, and mostly supportive, perspectives on the victors’ narrative. The Greek historians had better opportunities (more libraries and schools) and compelling political motives to write voluminous accounts, and the Roman and Greek elite had reasons to preserve and circulate them. Educated Romans and Greeks certainly read the histories of the earlier Persian, Peloponnesian, Spartan, Theban, Sicilian, and Macedonian conflicts, but there was little reason to rewrite them (again, with the exception of Alexander’s story).

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Concluding Observations on Greek Historical Writing

The seven centuries of Greek historical writing covered in this survey exhibit a rich variety of subjects and styles under the genre. History would not have the shape it does without Homeric epic, lyric poetry, Athenian drama, rhetoric, and the prose and poetry of fifth-century philosophers and scientists who influenced its formation. The Greek culture of warfare, interpersonal and political maneuvering, speeches, and search for verifiable truth led to its inception and fed its growth. In perspective, one can very broadly posit four major stages in the development of historical writing. First, Herodotus and Thucydides, jointly, really defined the fundamental style and content of the genre and inspired development by others. Second came a philosophical and rhetorical shift in the fourth century, fostered by Xenophon and epitomized by Ephorus and Theopompus. Then, third, the universal history of the Hellenistic era evolved, stimulated by the expeditions of Alexander and by his first chroniclers, given shape by Timaeus and further developed by Polybius. The final great shape shift came with strongly Rome-centrist writing, begun of course by the rise of Rome, marked first by the works of Polybius and Fabius Pictor, and finally proceeding to the string of late republican and imperial Greek historians. Remarkably, almost without parallel in ancient literature, this genre survived with a sense of worth and continuity in which many authors picked up where the last left off: Thucydides begins where Herodotus stopped, Xenophon resumes Thucydides, Polybius continues Timaeus, and Posidonius resumes Polybius. They also each carried forward many stylistic and formal conventions related to speeches, digressions, proems, source citation, and the like. There is generally a sense of collegial respect despite different perspectives and an awareness that the big project is to produce the best account of knowable events from mythical times to the present.

Many, though not all of these historians had direct experience of some of the events they covered and sought input from the oral testimony of participants or informed witnesses, visited sites of events, and indeed had personal experience in political and military affairs (Meister 2005: 420–1). This form of data gathering makes these historians highly valuable (if we are careful in our scrutiny of them too), and often it arguably produces a wisdom uncommon among later, purely “academic” historians, whose works are based mainly on the books of predecessors. The ancients also offer abundant commentary on method, theory, and general ideology informed by

philosophies of their day. We note that Greek historiography was in a constant and lively dialogue with its historical context, and the shape of the narrative often adapted to the interests and events of its era. Despite the obvious evolution to greater diversity without ever losing options, the genre is held to a core of claiming the deeper truth about events, preserving the memory of a culture's most crucial deeds, and usefully offering an indirect paradigm for the analysis of future events.

The following sections offer, first, general reflections on the proposed four major stages of the genre and, second, a view over time of some shared, formal aspects of writing and of select major themes discussed in this survey. We conclude by offering a few observations about the value of Greek historical writing today.

The Evolution of a Genre

We sketch here the four major stages of the tradition: this is just one suggestion as to how to visualize the complex sequence. The logographers, prose protohistorians of the sixth and fifth centuries, began with genealogies and traditions in individual city states, a pattern notably improved upon by Hecataeus. Later, Hellanicus, a contemporary of Herodotus and Thucydides, contributed ethnographic and chronographic works, most notably the *Atthis*. Herodotus made a huge leap by establishing themes of character, of ethnicities, and of individuals; of law and of authority; of human reciprocity and revenge, and of the divine hand directing human aspirations even as Homer had seen it. Herodotus does appreciate and emphasize the realistic and sophisticated “gray” quality of reality, the mix of good and bad, virtue and vice in individuals and in states. No man is self-sufficient, and also no man is heroically successful, until he dies in that status. The historian is alive to the ironies of material success and reputational failure, and even of the lowly in status surpassing the elite. Thucydides, by contrast, promotes a materialist basis for analysis and achievement and illustrates the striving for survival on the part of those in power and those not. He offers occasional but important observations on reputation derived from achievement whatever the ambiguity of ethical behavior, as is notably the case with Themistocles, Pericles, Nicias, and Alcibiades.

The second-stage shift comes in the fourth century, with impetus from Plato to the extent that he endorses a Socratic method of inquiry and refutation that follows a consistent “line of reasoning” (*logos*; Marincola 1997: 9 and 220) and he questions conventional divine causation. The development of epistemology and the systematic attempt to understand abstract concepts like justice and consistent cycles of constitutions lead to a new framing of historical narratives thereafter. Aristotle and, after him, the Hellenistic

philosophical schools, notably the Stoics, also contribute much to the new paradigms of history. History is never as systematic as philosophy in questioning all premises and seeking to define the truth. But Xenophon is the first early hybrid figure blending philosophy with history. He is intensely literate and thoughtful by inclination, as well as an accomplished military officer by experience. He embraces conventional mores, has a strong sense of religious piety, fosters devotion to fatherland, and holds Sparta and Cyrus as models (of a sort) for states and leaders. His historical narratives may lack a rich critical analysis and seldom focus on irony; in these respects Xenophon is clearly different from Herodotus and Thucydides, yet one has the sense of being guided by a mostly sober and ethical judgment.

The third point of great change occurs when Alexander's journeys and the reports of his historians arouse a strong appetite for history beyond the shores of Greece proper; and about this time Timaeus' writings on Sicily open up the perspective of a more global, universal history. Polybius also writes in the universal mode but, in great sympathy with Thucydides and in sharp antipathy to Timaeus, he uses sparingly the sensationalist, emotional stories (e.g. surrender of Hasdrubal to Scipio, public execution of Agathocles in Alexandria) and seeks to apply principles of human nature and carefully considered causation on a large scale. Polybius is also alive to the ethical differences between peoples – notably Greeks and Romans, but also Gauls and others – whose actions are constantly held up to scrutiny. Polybius particularly seeks to find the origins of Rome's greatness; he also notes the working of Fortune (Tyche), a strong religious notion in the Hellenistic period.

A sharp fault-line occurs in the Greek writers of the fourth stage, the Roman era – when, in view of the master superpower, all histories lead to Rome, metaphorically speaking. The prominence of a series of strong leaders culminating in the imperial rulers lends itself to stronger biographical content. The writers come not from mainland Greece proper, but from the wealthy fringe cities in the Greek West, Asia Minor, and Africa, and the audiences are mainly the Greek speakers of the Eastern Mediterranean, but also importantly the Roman elite. Hence their broad aims are to explain the evolution of power, highlight extremes of success and failure, and offer paradigms of human behavior, both for the ruler to follow best practices and for the subjects to realize that a stable government is in everyone's interests. Almost all of these authors ascribe the rise of Rome to some supernatural force, though Dio and Herodian also have an affinity for more Thucydidean motives based on human truisms and evidenced in invented speeches that spell out rationales.

Formal Aspects of Ancient Historiography

We close with some comments about general aspects of ancient Greek historical writing both in form and in thematic content, aspects that often distinguish it from modern historical writing. Among the many formal topics we discussed, we will focus here on prefaces and speeches. Digressions, the structure of the works, and narrative features change almost from work to work, depending on their appropriateness to the topic, and these changes are discussed in each chapter. Prefaces, since Herodotus and Thucydides, delimit the author's topic and hint at major interests guiding the narrative. But later historians seem to play with the established tradition of prefaces by postponing them (Polybius) or by omitting them entirely (Xenophon), for the purpose of prompting readers to notice and consider these authors' alteration of the received form.

Speeches probably began in emulation of Homer and were intended to add clarity and interest to the narrated events. Oddly enough, speeches seem rare in pre-Herodotean logographers but come into full life in Herodotus, in direct address, in dialogue (e.g., Solon and Croesus in Book 1), and even in pairs or even triads of set speeches (e.g., the debate on the Persian constitution in Book 3). Thucydides' speeches are generally longer and not infrequently in pairs, to allow a two-sided analysis of the debate (or four-sided in the case of the conference at Sparta in Book 1). Xenophon's speeches often characterize leaders, but they also add sophistication to structure and content. Xenophon himself is seen as a man of Socratic wisdom in last two speeches of the *Anabasis*, at 7.6.11–38 and 7.7.20–47. In the speech of Callistratus in Book 6 of the *Hellenica*, Xenophon even uses a speech to suggest a solution for the problem of Hellenic unity, notably for Athens and Sparta. On occasion, Xenophon's speeches resonate with those of Thucydides (cf. X. *Hell.* 3.5.8–15 with Th. 3.53–68). After *Hellenica* 3 he tends to use speeches more dramatically, and in *Hellenica* 6 he frames the battle of Leuctra with two sets of three speeches. The *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* shows no speeches in its extant portions. Timaeus was criticized by Polybius for not using speeches to synthesize main issues. With Polybius himself and his thirty-seven extant speeches we see a return, in the second century, to the Herodotean and Thucydidean roots of effective use of oratory. Noteworthy are the speeches of Flaminius and Philip V at Locris in 198 BC (Plb. 18.1–10), and the dramatic set speeches of Hannibal and Scipio before the battle at Zama (Plb. 15.6–8). In the late Roman republic rhetoric seems again firmly entrenched in history. Diodorus uses speeches effectively to highlight the motivation of states, interestingly not always in harmony with Thucydides on the fifth century. In the imperial era Arrian, Dio Cassius, and Josephus use speeches competently, to review issues and positions and explain motivation, sometimes with high drama (e.g. Josephus' speeches of those at Masada, *Jewish War* Book 7; Dio's speeches of Agrippa and Maecenas with advice to Augustus, *Roman History* Book 52). Appian used speeches more sparingly, but effectively – especially in events following the assassination of Julius Caesar. Finally Herodian is

generous in his use of speeches, thirty-three in all, balanced with pithy dialogue so as to move the action. There is no strictly traceable “evolution” in the use of speeches, except for the fact that almost every extant author since Herodotus uses them but does so with full flexibility of forms, sizes, and shape, each of these features being determined by the demands of the narrative theme and context.

Power, Metaforces, Historical Philosophies, and Continuities

Turning now from formal aspects to an overview of themes, we will look of course at power and human nature, but also at the related questions implicit in the following topics: causation, divine justice, leadership, civilization and the non-Greeks, and, briefly, legacy. First, on the topic of power, the modern, religious, and widely validated golden rule advocates the primacy of loving one’s neighbor as much as oneself. Altruism displayed to people other than one’s fellow citizens is not a principle highly espoused by most ancient Greeks. Yes, force for its own sake is not effective or necessary, but it can – and must – be used at times. The ancient Greeks valued honor rather than love, as the former contributed to the identity of the state, the family, and the individual citizen.

Each author and each era put its stamp on the discussion regarding the acquisition and maintenance of rule, the proper attitude of the subjects to empire, and how rule is lost. Divine fate came in and out of the central picture for each, as did the critical views of human nature and the appraisals of good and bad leadership. Herodotus focuses on the rise of Persia and the clash with the collective power of the Greeks, and in this he describes the “barbarian” confusion – of quantity of wealth, armies, and navies – and the preferable Greek quality of excellence exemplified in the major battles. For Thucydides, one crucial factor is “raw” human nature, which resembles the animal principle of killing or being killed to survive (survival of the fittest); unchecked human nature is self-centered and brutal. The view that power is fundamental to survival and to the acquisition of power is established in Book 1, chapters 1–20 – the “archaeology” – then carried into the speeches of Pericles (e.g. Th. 2.41) and continued in the stated “laws” of imperial leadership of the strongest (Th. 1.76 and 5.105). Xenophon’s *Anabasis* describes an expedition whose failed first aim was to reestablish royal power for Cyrus. The narrative recounts a time when the imperial rule of a single superpower among Greeks is no longer possible, and the lessons from the fate of the former Athens are invoked only as a warning not to take on hybriistic schemes (X. *An.* 7.1.27), an incentive to spur new Athenian power (X. *Hell.* 1.4.20), or a rhetorical caution against possible Athenian ambitions (X. *Hell.*

4.8.20). The ever-shifting politics of the fourth century and of the Hellenistic era saw historians describe the series of states in a succession of hegemonies that included the rise of Philip and Alexander (see, e.g., Theopompus and Aristobulus) and of the Sicilian tyrants admired by Philistius of Syracuse. But it is the rise of Rome that dictates the ultimate autopsy of power undertaken by the chroniclers of the republic and empire. Polybius presents a balanced portrait of the rising power, alternately taking on the view of the imperialist Romans and the subject people around the Mediterranean. The external threat of Carthage overrides internal Roman divisions, as had ultimately happened in the case of Greeks against Persians. Yet most interesting is Polybius' nuanced presentation of the question of how non-Romans can best respond to the new juggernaut, namely by working on friendly terms or by "pushing back," but in a carefully moderated way: these two paths are epitomized in a focal debate between the Greeks Philopoemen and Aristaeus (Plb. 24.11–13). During the late republic Diodorus Siculus talks of the Roman colonization of others in brutal terms – how, once they "held power over nearly the whole inhabited world, they confirmed their rule by fear" (D.S. 34.4.5) – with analogies to imperialist Athens and he argues that a fair treatment of subjects is the way to retain power. The *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus does eulogize Rome for its enduring and memorable empire (*hēgemonia*); Rome, "in its displaying greatest power [*archē*] and its most splendid deeds in peace and war," is greater than Persia and Macedonia and far more impressive than Athens or Sparta at their peak (D.H. 1.2). Josephus mixes traditional views of the rise and fall of powerful states with a new theocentrism; to defy Rome is to ignore the realities of others whom it has conquered, and even to be out of step with a divine plan to give power to the supreme people of the day (J. *BJ* 2.357–87 and 5.365–7). Appian's *Civil War* is attuned more to the internal power struggle among Romans and sees Caesar as another Alexander with "fortune and power" on his side (App. *BC* 2.149–54); in this critique he views the republic as a chaotic failure and the empire as a reasonable solution, but not one entirely without its risks. Arrian's narrative on Alexander may contain an implicit warning for Romans not to follow the Macedonian in his decline into imperialist hybris. Dio is arguably more keenly interested than any predecessor in the motives and means of building power in the empire: as a crude measure, Dio uses the term "power" (*dunamis*) 283 times in his extant books, while the same term occurs 130 times in Thucydides' text (which is half the size of the extant Dio), 71 times in Xenophon's *Anabasis* and *Hellenica* (which are about two thirds of Thucydides in length), and 51 times in Herodotus (which is longer than Thucydides by a quarter). Dio reflects Thucydidean pessimism about human nature, but with a positive view of the stabilizing effect of the emperor in principle and with severe criticism of individual emperors. In any case, all historians share an interest in the concept of power or rule, however termed – *archē*, *hēgemonia*, and so on (Wickersham 1994). Alongside the power of the ruler are represented

incidences of freedom and submission or acceptance of the hierarchy as inevitable or benign. Across the seven hundred years of power discourse, it is remarkable how little the initial vocabulary and paths of power laid down by Herodotus and Thucydides changed.

Human Nature

Thucydides takes an unusual, nonreligious approach to the problem of metahuman forces and sees the forces at work as essentially human instead. He is followed most closely, though with significant variations, by Polybius, Dio, and Herodian (and, among Latin-speaking Romans, by Sallust and Tacitus). His solutions therefore require that humans somehow subscribe to a social contract that allows for civil interaction and, when possible, for justice; but they also acknowledge the reality of the greater force of those who, for a given time, have it. For many historians, human nature did have fundamental checks against being brutally self-centered. The restraints were seen as a metahuman, more than physical force that controlled or decided which values prevail and against which values they are judged. Herodotus depicts human folly as overreach and blindness to divinely ordained limits; wisdom as restraint; and moderation and courage as high virtues. Thucydides may have followed Antiphon in depicting human nature as a force encompassing emotion or impulse on the one hand and evaluations or judgment on the other. Passages like Diodotus' speech in the Mytilenean debate in Thucydides (Book 3) graphically describe how leaders have to account for reason and emotion in their strategies with other states. Corcyrean *stasis* shows that human reason is eroded in times of war, not allowing the better value of peacetime (Th. 3.82). For Xenophon, however, leadership – how best to guide the collective state or the army – is the aspect of human nature that requires the greatest concern. Polybius shows as much interest in national character and group dynamics as in individual nature (Romans, Greeks, Gauls, Carthaginians). His character sketch of Hannibal reveals that man's emotional and intellectual core, informing our reading of the author's views on human nature and power, which, at least here, are conditioned by motives of revenge (Plb. 9.22–6). Also of interest are Polybius' views on human "dispositions" (*diatheseis*), which describe more or less fixed abilities of individuals (e.g., Aratus at Plb. 4.8.7–8) – as opposed to "states of character" (*hexeis*), which involve choice. Among historians of the Roman empire, few delineate a close analysis of human nature as some predecessors had, though they all continue to portray human fears, hopes, and desires in action and speech as part of the historical drama. Josephus puts in Titus' mouth a speech recalling the law of human nature concerning the rule of the strongest, which has resonance with Herodotus, Thucydides and others (J. BJ 5.365–7). Arrian quotes the gurus of

India to warn Alexander about his fate, ultimately mortal despite his superhuman conquests (Arr. *An.* 7.1). The Roman-era writer closest to Thucydides is Dio in his pessimistic analysis of a human nature rooted in acquisitiveness, aggression, and fear, employing fifteen different phrases for “human nature” (Reinhold 1988: 216). Again, the human yearning to rule others is invoked as one rule, but so is clemency, seen as a human attribute (D.C. 58.12; 55.16 and 21).

Supernatural Forces

So human choices and folly were both grounded in the realities of human nature, but were, in most historians, also subject to some form of superhuman control. Control here is exercised as an indirect retribution, coming from the gods or fate, for the hybriatic overstepping of one’s bounds. The narratives highlighting *hubris* and reversal of fortune may derive from a Delphic tradition, but they are clearly outlined in Herodotus: for example Croesus is fated to destroy and empire (*archē*, Hdt. 1.53, 79). In general Herodotus equates power with wealth and splendor among the barbarians (Croesus, Xerxes), but with “excellence” (*aretē*) among the Greeks. Herodotus’ Xerxes shows *hubris* by flaunting the limits of nature in seeing a kingdom to the heavens, but also classically by making land into sea through the canal at Mount Athos and sea into land through the bridge over the Hellespont. The Persian Mardonius repeats the transgression of divine space by crossing the Asopus River before the battle of Plataea. Supernatural forces are factors in Thucydides only insofar as humans observe them superstitiously, but Xenophon is famously pious in his sympathetic portrait of people observing omen, consulting oracles, and performing sacrifices (e.g., X. *An.* 3.2). In the pious Xenophon, leadership is frequently guided by seers and sacrifices (X. *An.* 5.2.9 and 24), and oracles and portents predict sacrifice in battle – for example at Leuctra (X. *Hell.* 1.7.33). Divine providence plays a crucial role in the historians of Alexander, since it seems to have done so during his career (e.g., in the consultation of the oracle of Zeus at Ammon in Egypt). Later on in the second century AD, Arrian’s narrative also underlines the role of divinity in Alexander’s fate, including the seers who predict his being led to the place where he would die (Arr. *An.* 7.16).

But divine control can also be or seem whimsical, a force that simply tests humans and demonstrates that we must deal with whatever the metahuman forces send us. Many historians posit or stipulate a divinity like Fortune (Tyche) or a principle of chance that administers retribution to a person who overreaches human boundaries. Metahuman causation can be found, for

example, in Herodotus' stories of divine retribution, most saliently against Xerxes; in Xenophon's constant awareness of divine guidance through oracles; in Polybius' attention to the role of fortune in the rise of Rome; in Philostratus', Diodorus', and Arrian's Stoic beliefs in a "divine providence"; and in Josephus' and Appian's beliefs that a divine plan allowed Rome to reach its imperial height. Fortune plays an ambiguous and not a mechanical role in Polybius's second-century BC account, both as a goddess embodying Zeus' will and as a fickle force among mortals (*tuchē*): particular chances must be assessed in strategies, but there seems to be an overall scheme for Fortune to support Rome's ascent. Almost two hundred years later, Josephus, during the empire, highlighted a rather different divine will, one in line with his Jewish beliefs, and supported the cooperation of Jews with the Roman elite: it is, by God's will, the Romans' time to rule (J. *BJ* 5.412). A bit later, in the second century AD, and in a similar spirit, Appian shows the transition from republic to empire as a change foreshadowed by divine signs (*BC* 4.132–4). Appian's near contemporary Dio was, he tells us, led to write history by dreams and portents; the goddess Fortune guided him in his task and divine portents play a crucial role in his story of Rome. The parade of views on divine or metahuman forces reveals no "schools" of thought, but does illustrate that the materialist, nondivine cosmos of Thucydides is a rare construction, not shared even by Dio, who otherwise reflects Thucydidean views. A divine will and fortune seem to be favored to explain forces beyond our control and forces with which, it was believed, humans had to reckon either through sacrifice and oracles or through resignation when things did not go in their favor.

Modern readers need not necessarily associate these cosmic forces with a sense of the gods as models of moral excellence, which they never were for the Greeks. "The god," especially Zeus, is the overseer of justice as a balance in which insolence is punished and proper respect for "the sacred" is eventually rewarded. But this supervision need not control man's inhumanity to man, which requires guidance from the laws and customs of men and of the state. Greek historians also serve as a kind of check on the valuation of human actions, informally adding to the unwritten laws that maintain traditional values like virtue, restraint, prudence, reason, and courage.

Causation

Apart from the unpredictable cosmic forces, the historians all show keen concern for patterns of causation – how human conflict starts and proceeds, how the links in the chain of events interrelate. Herodotus seems to locate historical causation in the deeper human realities of cultural differences and commonalities, emotional and rational motivations, and the natural arc of the

growth and decline of great powers. His introductory tale of tensions between Europe and Asia is (even if he suspends belief) programmatic of his typical concern for issues of gender and culture behind conflict (Hdt. 1.1–5). In the climactic Books 7, 8, and 9 of Herodotus, there is a clear causal chain of events leading to Xerxes' invasion and his defeat. Thucydides also previews his fundamental notions of causation in his opening "archaeology" in Book 1, showing how security can lead to surplus wealth and then to big navies, which foster military power. In the war narrative proper, he describes how fear, honor, and pragmatic self-interest combine with national character and individual leadership to give rise to conflict and to determine success (Th. 1.76). Though incalculable chance looms large at times, human intelligence and swift action are required to turn it to one's advantage (e.g., the Athenians at Pylos, or Brasidas in Thrace). Xenophon describes a looser causal chain of events that drift and require good leadership to bring matters to order and to act piously, in accordance with the divine order. For Polybius, the causation of later events is to be sought in their beginnings (*archai*) and their earlier causes (*aitiai*) (Plb. 3.6.1–7). He notes the deeper causes for Greeks opposing non-Greeks, but he also sees the causal importance of vengeance for Hannibal in the Second Punic War (Plb. 3.10). Dionysius in the late republic sought the cause of Roman ascendancy, tracing Rome's kinship back to Greece: a neat political explanation for the subject Greek audience of his day, and one that conveniently used the term *archē*, which at once can mean "cause," "beginning," and "rule." Certain Roman historians take advantage of the idea of divine causation to explain proscriptions (App. *BC* 4.16.61), and even the necessity that Rome rule the Jews (J. *BJ* 5.365–7); thus they evade logical rationales by recourse to causes beyond our cognition.

Leadership

The qualities of good and poor leaders are also a pervasive theme among the Greek historians – following from concern with daily life in the city-state, and also taking a cue from Homer and Greek legend. For each historian there are outstanding models of leadership, all with some human faults, but each illustrating the values most prized by each author. Herodotus proclaimed that the Ionian leaders among the Persians were not generals but "slaves" to the king (Hdt. 7.96), and the lavish lifestyle of the Persian commander is displayed in the captured accommodations of Mardonius (Hdt. 9.82). On the Greek side, Leonidas and Themistocles receive preeminent treatment. In Thucydides, Archidamas, Nicias, Brasidas, Cleon, and Alcibiades take their turn in the spotlight for their respective leadership abilities, but the author famously highlights the qualities of Pericles in contrast to those of his successors (intelligence, ability to communicate, patriotism and being above

bribes: Th. 2.65). Leadership is a prominent theme in Xenophon's historical works, starting with his own personal call, via a divinely sent dream, to lead the Greeks from Persian territory (X. *An.* 3.1.11–14). He praises characters individually, for example the noble but flawed Cyrus; Clearchus, leader of the Ten Thousand (X. *An.* 2.6.8–10, 3.1); and the Spartan Agesilaus, a model leader for him (X. *Hell.* 4.3.19). In the *Hellenica* there are several other paradigmatic leaders: the Spartan Mnasippus, the Athenian Iphicrates, Jason of Pherae, and the Theban Epaminondas. At Corcyra, Mnasippus and Iphicrates represent two models of leadership (X. *Hell.* 6.2). Other leaders are less able or corrupt, for example Proxenus and Menon (both at X. *An.* 2.6). Contrasting with Xenophon, the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* offers a sharp critique of Agesilaus in Asia (Fr. 24). But this historian does praise the Athenian Conon as a model of leadership. Theopompus seems pessimistically to review a series of unsuccessful leaders; he had hoped for Philip to bring unity, only to be disappointed (Frs. 27 and 237a). A portrait of Alexander as leader, usually nuanced, is central to the Alexander historians of the Hellenistic period, but their works do not offer good comparative schemata of characteristics, since one figure dominates the scene. Leadership is a key feature for Polybius, as important in his work as it was in Xenophon's. Polybius highlights models of leadership in Philopoemen, Aristaenus, Q. Fabius Maximus, Flamininus, Scipio Aemilianus, and others, including even a formidable foe like Hannibal. The reign of Philip V is traced as becoming harsher as Philip grew older (Plb. 10.26.8). The Achaeans at one point suffered "since they could not produce a leader equal to their character" (Plb. 2.39.9–12). Under historians of the Roman imperial period, the perspective necessarily changes from an analysis of good individual generals to a closer focus on the character of individual emperors, as historical narratives take the "bibliographic turn." Josephus, for example, notes Claudius' enlightened views about ruling an empire built on diversity (J. *AJ* 19.249, 280–91). Josephus also offers his views on individual Jewish or local leaders in their dealings with the Romans, for example Agrippa I and Agrippa II (J. *AJ* 19–20). The books of Appian's chronicle of Civil War in the republic fall quite naturally in order around the chief factional leaders: Marius versus Sulla (Book 1), Pompey versus Caesar (Book 2), Antony and Octavian against the assassins (Book 3), then against each other (Books 4–5). Although Arrian shifts to the almost legendary exploits of the very non-Roman Alexander, his narrative can be seen as the portrait of a huge figure against which the emperors could be measured for good or ill. Books 1–3 of his *Anabasis* build on the theme of a heroic general who extends his dominion; Julius Caesar is the obvious parallel, though Arrian avoids allusions to him. We noted, generally regarding Roman-era writers, that virtually all had contact with or observation of the leading figures of the day, if not with the emperors themselves; this enables each one of them to have some personal experience of leaders in operation (e.g., Josephus of Vespasian and Trajan, Appian of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, Arrian of Hadrian and

Civilization and the “Barbarians”

For the Greeks, *barbaros* meant essentially “non-Greek,” in our terms “the other,” and hence it does not necessarily share the connotations of the corresponding modern word “barbarian” (Cartledge 1993; Vlassopoulos 2013). Yet the Greek concept of “the barbarian” is not monolithic and goes through nuanced transformations over centuries of use by different authors. Hecataeus shows sympathy with the non-Greek in his account, but it is Herodotus who establishes a pattern of broadly including non-Greeks as a means of comparing cultures in order to highlight ethnic differences and better understand “Greekness.” Herodotus for instance shows the minimal hierarchy and the impressive physical might of the Scythians; and he points up the differences between Greeks and Persians when the latter mutilate the corpse of Leonidas but the former do not do the same with that of Masistius (Hdt. 7.22–5, 79). The Greek–barbarian antithesis is mostly absent in Thucydides, but it reappears as a crucial, unifying theme in Xenophon’s *Anabasis*. Among the forces with Cyrus and Xenophon, non-Greeks outnumber Greeks ten to one. A series of warlike non-Greeks in the inland regions are unable to defeat the Ten Thousand in their clever strategies (X. *An.* 4.7). The motif is less prominent in Xenophon’s *Hellenica*, where the Persians play a crucial political role manipulating Greeks, but there is no focus on their role as a cultural “other.” In general Xenophon’s text lacks the extended, deeper descriptions of barbarians that Herodotus had offered. For him, they mostly serve as a foil to the Greeks and as a litmus test of Greek values. Ephorus is able to admire virtue even in non-Greeks like the Scythian Anacharsis (*FGrHist* 70 F 42), and is deliberately critical of Pericles, the chief spokesperson for Athenian civilization in Thucydides.

In the Roman era generally, universal history was the most important new genre, made compelling by the Roman conquest of the Mediterranean. The topic was opened up by Timaeus and developed by Polybius. For Polybius, the category of “barbarian” is complicated, since the original meaning “non-Greek” is blurred when the Romans assume the role of the powerful new promoters of their own brand of civilization. Against the Romans, on the scale of virtues, are measured the Greeks. Yet others in Polybius’ world maintain the role of true “barbarians” in our sense of “non-civilized,” but with some nuances. For instance, the Illyrians and the Gauls are both lawless and aggressive, yet the Gauls are highly valorous and in that sense noble (Plb. 2.30). Stoicism and the power of the common good lent a unifying theme: for example, Posidonius suggested the civilizing benefit of Roman rule but also structured his narrative by nation rather than chronology. Later authors

developed this during the empire, but also acknowledged the worthy cultural identities of other people under Rome: Diodorus presents Egypt at some length; the Alexandrian Appian's *Roman History* is organized ethnographically, most of his twenty four books treating each people separately; Josephus is of course concerned at length with the history of the people of Judea; and we should remember that, in addition to his *Anabasis of Alexander*, Arrian wrote separate works on India, Bithynia, Parthia, and the region of the Black Sea. Roman hegemony has in effect opened up historical writing in its inclusiveness in the spirit of Herodotus, but with a much broader and deeper agenda. This change was not, it seems, so much in the spirit of knowing the enemies of Rome as of systematically explaining the rich diversity of those in the empire, both to Romans in the West and to the Greek readers in the East.

Legacy

The utility of history ensures its continuing legacy. Dionysius of Halicarnassus' frequently quoted dictum that "history is philosophy [teaching] by examples" (D.H. *Rh.* 11.2) refers to the passage where Thucydides is saying that readers who wish to see the clear truth of events will find his work useful (Th. 1.22.4). Dionysius is illustrating his point that "education is a discussion of customs" (*ēthōn*, sc. manners, character, disposition) and that history gives examples of lives that teach us "the avoidance of badness and the acquisition of virtue." We can apply his view to ancient historians generally, with the caution that it is not always clear what constitutes virtue or badness, and that the very process of leading readers to determine values is arguably the primary value of historical writing. It should be fairly self-evident that the questions probed by the ancient historians have had an ongoing relevance to later ages and to our own: power, human nature, metahuman forces, how reason and emotion are understood and used productively, models of leadership, lines of causation, and how the identity of a people is established or questioned.

There is a remarkable continuity in the fundamental form and subject matter of Greek historical writing. Even into the early Christian era of the fourth century and following, there was a consistent reverence for (and reference to) classical predecessors in the genre, who offered a palate of options to serve the very different historical circumstances. The fixity of the genre – indeed into the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and the age of reason up to the present – is, for better or worse, a major legacy of the Greek historians. An asset of this continuity has been the ongoing scrutiny of the elite and of the interplay between states in politics and war. Antiquity offered ready parallels and lessons. A concern might be the very focus on male elite citizens, while the

history of the colonized, women, uneducated, and poorer classes was less of an object of attention. Of course history and social science of the last hundred or so years have addressed that imbalance of a Eurocentric elite male perspective, but the imbalance itself does not lessen the value of the earlier narratives, especially when we still use them to tease out the stories that were not in the ancients' spotlight or to see the implicit criticisms of ancient historians, who themselves were usually on the fringes of power.

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Greek texts and translations of most of the major extant authors, including those of the Roman period, are available online at the Perseus site: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/collection?collection=Perseus:collection:Greco-Roman>.

More specifically for the Roman period discussed in [Chapter 8](#), translations of Polybius, Diodorus, Dionysius, Cassius Dio, and Plutarch are available on the wonderful site LacusCurtius, managed by Bill Thayer and based at the University of Chicago: <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/home.html>.

LacusCurtius also makes available numerous Loeb Library translations, for instance of Diodorus (http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/home.html) and of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Dionysius_of_Halicarnassus/).

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